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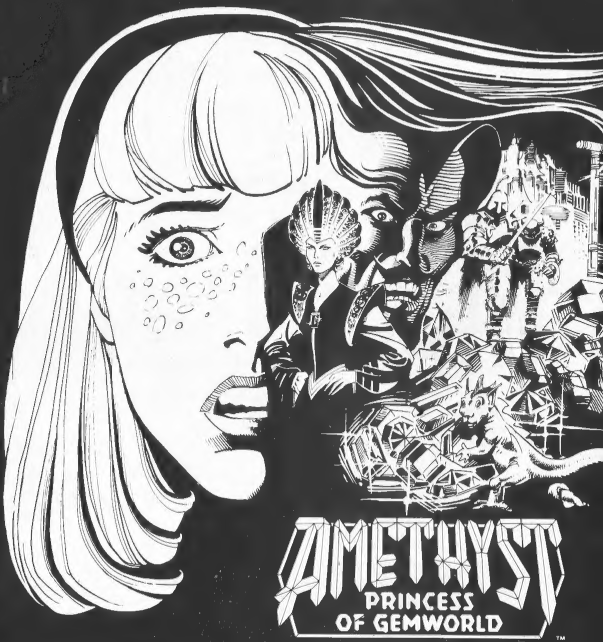

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ISSUE #8
MARCH

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COMICS SCENE

Issue No. 8 March

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ABOUT THE COVER: Spider-Man's best-loved artist, John Romita, Sr., contributed the stunning shot of Spidey. For more on both Romita and Web-Head, see page 32. Spider-Man © 1983 Marvel Comics Inc.; Family Circus © 1982 Bil. KEANE; Glenn Keane photo by Deborah Upton, Mickey Mouse © 1983 WALT DISNEY PRODUCTIONS; *Cerebus the Aardvark* © 1983 DAVE SIM.

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Word Balloons

Reasons & Recommendations

There are a few things about this issue which may look a little different to you. First, there's a new typeface in use. We wanted to give the magazine a more distinct look and were afforded that opportunity when we changed typesetters.

We're also pretty happy with the new cover treatments. For our first anniversary issue, we wanted a special cover but, after looking at it, we decided it was even more exciting then we expected it to be, so, you will be seeing more explosive covers in upcoming months. Please let us know what you think about these new directions we're trying.

Dave McDonnell's name has crept up the masthead lately and currently resides as our Associate Editor. After leaving *Prevue* for STARLOG, Dave was trapped, by yours truly, into helping out on COMICS SCENE. Now, Dave serves as STARLOG's Managing Editor and when he's not keeping Howard organized and on schedule, he's in my office causing trouble. Welcome aboard, Dave!

* * *

A while back, Fred Hembeck triumphantly returned to *The Buyer's Guide*. In his first installment, we saw him swamped under a mountain of comics and magazines from all the new and old-time publishers. I sympathize with Fred because I read everything that comes into the offices—*all* DCs, Marvels, Pacific Comics, First Comics, Eclipse publications, *Cerebus*, *Elfquest*, Noble, Capital and so on. Believe it or not, there's a great deal of good material being published today—much more than there was a mere year or two ago. Reading comics has become fun once again, and now, I eagerly await the next issue of several different magazines. That's a great feeling.

Allowing me to make some suggestions, company by company. Beginning with DC, the solid, long-running titles like *Batman*, *Detective*, *Flash* and *Green Lantern* remain enjoyable, mainstream reads. I look forward to Doug Moench's reign on the Batman titles, especially with the forthcoming new direction the books will take. Being a team fan, I can most-assuredly recommend the New Teen Titans and the *Legion of Super-Heroes*. Both Marv Wolfman and Paul Levitz are striving—and succeeding—at making the team comics interesting character studies of super individuals in action. The revived *Blackhawk* is perhaps the most underrated of the newer titles. Try a copy. Jan Durrsema's art makes *Arion, Lord of Atlantis* exciting, just as Ron Randall makes *Barren Earth*, in the back of *Warlord*, nice to see. As for the upcoming titles, on the strength of their introductory stories, *Omega Men*, *Amethyst* and *Batman and the Outsiders* should all be diverting entertainments.

Down only four blocks from us, Marvel has more than enough interesting titles. *Ka-Zar* a book I praised only a few issues ago, remains fresh and innovative. I can also say that the post-Miller *Daredevils* are just as engaging and should remain interesting reading for some time. Meanwhile, Jim Starlin's art improves by leaps and bounds on *Dreadstar* and Paul Smith has instilled a vitality long missing from *The X-Men*; I suspect it will rebound by summer. Having grown up with *Iron Man*, I'm glad to see it remaining shiny, golden and intriguing. As for the rest, well, I am glad to see fresh blood pumped back into *Captain America*, *Dr. Strange*, *The Avengers* and the *Fantastic Four*. And of course, the Spider-Man titles are enjoyable once again. For the reasons why, see our cover story.

Elsewhere, *Cerebus* and *Elfquest* remain original, fun and dynamic alternative books. Just as interesting is *Eclipse Magazine*, one of the true pioneers of the alternative market which is, sadly, turning into a comic book later this year. It was a nice showcase for *different* kinds of stories. Also "different" is *Warp*, the first from First. Although it's not Frank Brunner's best work, it remains fresh enough to be worth your attention.

There's more, I'm sure, but that's enough cheering for now. If you don't read these titles, give 'em a try. If you do read them now, let me know if you agree.

—Robert Greenberger

Lettering

Thanks!

When we sent out the cry for mail, we got it! The editorial office was crammed with mail and we want to thank each and every one of you. Now that you've found out how easy it is, keep it up! We read every letter and post card that comes our way—it sure beats working—but remember, we can't answer you individually. Our address, as always, remains

Lettering
COMICS SCENE
475 Park Avenue South
New York, NY 10016

Complaints

Dear Editor,

. . . Overall, COMICS SCENE #6 was your least interesting issue to date (#2 was the best). If you're trying to sell copies of COMICS SCENE, this sure seems to be the wrong way to go about it. You almost seem to deliberately go out of your way to feature articles that do not appeal to mainstream fans.

Which is not to say that I did not enjoy COMICS SCENE #6. It was interesting reading about things I had never heard of before, instead of reading the same rehash of information. But six pages on *Crusader Rabbit*? Sheesh! Gimme a break. Who the hell cares about some dumb cartoon nobody's ever even heard of?

Captain Easy, on the other hand, was short enough to be interesting. As for Air Pirates, I'll have to echo the sentiments of the vast majority of readers: GET RID OF HOWARD CRUSE! His column stinks. And while we're on the subject, dump Brian Pearce. His cartoons aren't very good.

The best features in the ish were the *Camelot 3000* preview and part two of the Inkers' Panel. I also liked the interview with Max Allan Collins, even though I don't read *Ms. Tree* or *Dick Tracy*. And the "Pesky" Pasko Guest Spot was another highlight. John Byrne seems to have opened quite a can of worms with his.

Barry Dutter
2283 Old Farm Rd.
Scotch Plains, NJ 07076

Seems we ticked you off a bit Barry. In our defense, let's look at a few things: Crusader Rabbit *may not be a part of your memory but for many of us, including Howard and Bob, it holds a special place. And the vast majority of readers have not asked us to remove the Loose Cruse column. In fact, since he started the Air Pirates columns, the mail has been greatly in his favor. Brian Pearce also has gotten a reprieve since we ran negative comments in issue five. So, they will both be here to stay. Stick with us, we're getting better all around.*

Dear Editor,

. . . You want letters? You're on.

Your coverage of *Camelot 3000* in COMICS SCENE #6 was much appreciated. I have issue one of DC's first maxi-series and I loved it! With any luck, the series will get even better. Kudos to Berr, Bolland & Co. One thing bothered me, though. I noticed that DC owns all copyrights to *Camelot 3000*. Since Camelot isn't set within the "DC Universe" and doesn't use established characters owned by the company, I had hoped that this would not be so. Will this be standard policy on all DC mini- and maxi-series, or is there a special reason in *Camelot*'s case?

As you may have guessed, I am a creators' rights advocate. Why should a writer who submits a story to DC's *House of Mystery* be denied the same rights that he would have if he submitted the same tale in prose form to *Twilight Zone Magazine*, for example? Marvel has taken the first corporate steps with its *Epic Illustrated*, *Marvel Graphic Novels* and now the Epic Comics line. Is DC doing the same with its upcoming *Tyro Book*? Thank you, Marty Pasko, for stating your case so eloquently.

I caught the *Modesty Blaise* pilot the other night and honestly wish that I hadn't. The script was too cornball for my taste, and the acting was not much better. Hopefully, *Daredevil* will fare better, not to mention the Batman film.

Andrew Laubacher
3858 Gains Basin Rd.
Albion, NY 14411

Unlike Marvel, DC currently does not have a program that entitles the creators to the copyright of their creations. This situation may change in the future though.

Dear Mr. Greenberger,

. . . Well—a professional magazine about the comics culture! CS is really good; mostly it's exciting. The balance between the serious and the newsworthy is, I think, its best asset. ("Victims of the Lie" was a no-holds-barred indictment of an attitude that afflicts all aspects of a High Culture-low culture society. As insightful as Mr. Pasko's comments were, however, they were almost passed over as sour grapes. His initial comments about Mr. Byrne were too emotionally-charged to lend credibility to the bulk of his argument. But when he finally got down to it—he was brilliant!

Howard Cruse's article, "Abduction of a Mouse" (bad title!) reminded me of Henry Fielding's dilemma in the eighteenth-century: same problem, how far may parody/satire go? Fielding's plays satirized thespians and politicians and they all got so mad, they issued the Licensing Act to control how far you could stick your tongue out. I'd like to see an in-depth article or perhaps interview with some knowledgeable person about the difficulties of writing satire or parody. They could start by defining the terms!

I loved the article on the creators of Crusader Rabbit, my favorite TV character as a child. In fact, cover to cover, CS was wonderful. Again, the balance between historical, technical (the inkers) and contemporary topics keeps one hopping.

Cynthia D'Errico
6720 Sherbrok St. W., Apt. 44
Montreal, Quebec H4B 1P2
Canada

P.S. Why is that so many comic book creators wear beards? Is this a tribal custom or is it a symbol of their countercultural endeavors?

Dear Editor,

. . . As a long time Jay Ward aficionado, I'd like to thank you for Fred Patten's recent article(s) on Crusader Rabbit, and its place in the history of TV animation.

I'd like to suggest that a similar retrospective be done on what was perhaps American TV's finest animated adventure series, Hanna-Barbera's *Jonny Quest*. *IQ* had everything—fast moving plots, adventure, intrigue, exotic locales—and considering the interest in *Raiders of the Lost Ark* and similar adventure movies/shows, I think a revival of *IQ* might do very well in the marketplace. (Are you listening Messrs. H-B?)

I recall the animation being very well done too, with an almost pulp-illo style to it—although this might just be the effect of a 24-year-old trying to recall the uncritical reactions of a nine-year old. Still, *IQ*, was probably the best technical animation HB ever came up with, and deserves better than to be left in limbo while such drek as the umpteenth reincarnation of *Scooby-Doo* continues on the air.

R. J. Ortega
Military Sealift Command Office
Indian Ocean
FPO San Francisco, CA 96601

Dear Robert:

. . . You wanted letters? Okay, here's a letter. Funny . . . I write semi-often to the other STARLOG MESS publications, but I've never written to COMICS SCENE, until now.

What did I think of issue #6? Glad you asked. I loved it! From that cover by Brian Bolland, to a very controversial Guest Spot column, to the always interesting Loose Cruse, to the Forum on inking.

I especially enjoyed the Forum on inking, with Klaus Janson, Bob Layton, Tom Palmer, and Joe Rubinstein. I really enjoy this type of format, where the reader almost becomes a (silent) part of the conversation! I know this Forum idea can't be used for every installment of Cresting the Comics, but I would like to see it appear once in a while.

Conrad P. Felber
PO Box 2347
Cochrane, Ontario
Canada P0L 1C0

On Issue Six

Hi.

. . . Enjoyed the *Captain Easy* article by Ron Goulart in your latest issue. Also liked the earlier *Barney Google* and *Scorchy Smith* articles in this series. Hope there will be more. Also liked the Max Collins article. Hope you'll continue to have articles on comic strips, both contemporary and historic. Loved the Hembeck team-up page.

Shirley Meech
1336 Brampton Rd.
Los Angeles, CA 90041

Ron returns next issue with a special look at Terry and the Pirates.

Dear Howard and Bob,

. . . I can't understand why people are not writing in! Maybe they are so flattened by your quality that they are too dumbstruck to offer any criticism. I am 23 and hope to one day work in the comics field as a professional. I have really enjoyed the "Cresting the Comics" feature. This alone is worth the price of an issue. To get tips from the pros directly will be of great help to me. In this regard, I think CS is doing a service to inspire new talent. The impact of "CTC" may not be felt for years, but I hope I will have enough determination to make it. I know I can.

Gordon Manley
PO Box 3041
Porte, VA 23201

COMICS SCENE,

. . . Thank you for finally publishing *Crusader Rabbit* part one. Though the animation was crude compared to Bugs Bunny or Mighty Mouse, I still wouldn't miss a show for the world.

It was also fascinating to learn Rocky and Bullwinkle, Dudley Dorright and others were related to the Crusader Rabbit characters.

Thomas Helms
59 Fisher St.
W. Medway, MA 02053

Is This For Real?

Dear Bob,

. . . Hats off to your photographer Deborah Upton. We should see more of her work. After seeing your picture in the last issue (Nov.), I think you have a sexy bod!

Laurie K.
Hicksville, NY

An Open Letter from Frank Brunner

Re: Doctor Strange/Silver Dagger Reprint by Marvel

Original Creators: Brunner and Englehart

"In Case You Were Wondering" Dep't:

Why the cover and introduction were not done by the aforementioned creators. Answer: They were not allowed to do so unless they signed the "work for hire" contract. Both creators have refused to sign. Obviously this is an important point to Marvel, since both Brunner and Englehart have agreed to sign a "per job" agreement. What's strange is that this book is being touted as part of the "Epic" line of creator-owned comics. (?)

"Art for Art's Sake" Dep't:

Under the medieval Marvel Comics dictum, the only thing acceptable is total capitulation and never mind appropriateness of justice. They offered the creators a very good fee, more or less a bribe, for signing away the total rights to everything they had ever written or drawn in the past or future for Marvel Comics. That is the "work for hire" contract.

"Sell Out" Dep't:

The other two books being reprinted have so much company/creator conflicts, since neither Starlin nor (surprisingly) B. Smith (who stood for artistic integrity years ago), have any integrity left! In agreeing to Marvel's demands, they have signed away any future claims to work they obviously consider worthless! Or perhaps just allowed themselves to be exploited at a time of financial need (the "quick buck" syndrome).

"Opinion" Dep't:

Marvel Comics has evolved into a fascist organization—into a company which reflects the ruthless tactics the government used against (then) Allied Comics, which survived the onslaught of the Early '50s only to use the same strong-arm tactics against its own creators!

So I say, in supporting Marvel Comics, you further inhibit the work of the creators who make comics what they are. As for myself, I wouldn't work there if they paid me to!

Frank Brunner

San Diego Salute

Dear Bob,

. . . Thank you for the swell coverage you gave our San Diego Comic-Con. It was good meeting you in person after the phone conversations we've had.

It is especially nice to see ourselves in Comic Fandom's first real pro newsstand mag devoted to the artform we all love. . . and treated to so beautifully, too! Steven Plunkett's art direction is of award-winning quality—top graphic design. Howard Zimmerman's editing gives us a wide variety of interest; your writing makes it flow so well and you are right on top of everything.

But the big gratitude goes to Kerry O'Quinn and Norman Jacobs for investing their hard-earned money in a gamble situation. We at the San Diego Comic-Con believe that comic fandom is for the general public, too and we'll help you any way we can to get the goal, of making comic fandom available to the general public, achieved.

Shel Dorf
President
San Diego Comic-Con

Aw, gee Shel, come on. You really wrote all that because we ran your picture in color, right? We'll see you next summer.

Spirit Corrections

Dear Bob:

. . . Many thanks for your coverage of the announcement of our *Spirit* and *Little Nemo* animated feature in COMICS SCENE. Getting information out to your readership is very important to us and we hope to make future appearances in your publications.

I would like to point out some small corrections. The spelling of *The Spirit*'s writer/director is Brad Bird, not Byrd, and mention should be made of his partner, Jerry Rees, who collaborated on the story for the film and who will serve as supervisor of animation. Also, your article implied that our producer, Gary Kurtz, was introduced to the Spirit by me. Definitely not true. Gary has been a long-time collector and admirer of Will Eisner's work, as he is of many artists in the sequential graphics—(known as a comics to some)—and needed no introduction to Eisner's genius. It was a happy coincidence that Brad, Jerry, and myself approached him with a project ideally suited to all concerned.

Best regards to the O'Quinn staff and your readers.

Steven Paul Leiva
Director of Animation Development
Kinetographics

Erratum

What's an issue without a few mistakes? We really goofed last issue when we told you the mini-poster giveaway was on page 39. At the last minute, it was decided to move the subscription offer to page 37 and the cover never got changed. For those of you who read last issue, the giveaway is part of the subscription ad. It's not too late for those of you who missed out on the offer, to go find the back issue right away and subscribe.

(Continued on page 65)

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Comics Reporter

PEOPLE

Cartoonists Guild Honors Women

PHOTO: JOHN KOLTNER

From left: historian Avis Rosenberg, artist Shary Flenniken, artist Mary Wilshire, Elfquest's Wendy Pini, strip artist Nicole Hollander and artist Trina Robbins.

Real freedom is being able to support yourself," claimed *Trots & Bonnie* creator Shary Flenniken to a spirited round of applause, thereby setting the tone of independence and enthusiasm at the 16th annual meeting of the Cartoonists Guild. With both a comprehensive slide show and a lively panel discussion highlighting this year's meeting, the Guild paid well-deserved tribute to women in the field of cartooning. In the last three years, the Guild's own female membership has quadrupled, reflecting the record number of women cartoonists who have entered this traditionally male-dominated profession and whose work has been steadily growing in importance and recognition.

Held in early November at New York's Lotos Club, the afternoon event began with a slide presentation of the work of some 50 contemporary female cartoonists, including such luminaries as Trina Robbins (see page 49) and Lee Marrs, and ranging in topics—many humorous, some deadly serious — from politics to relationships to eating and dieting, and beyond usual taboos to such subjects as abortion, menstruation, and orgasm.

During the panel discussion which followed, moderator Mary Wilshire fielded questions from an audience of 130 people, composed mainly of Guild members and various publishing house representatives. Wilshire, whose work has appeared in *Aftershock, National Lampoon, Heavy Metal,* and Marvel's *Crazy,* was joined on the panel by Shary Flenniken, another *National Lampoon* contributor; Wendy Pini of *Elfquest* fame; Nicole Hollander, known for her "Sylvia" strips, a fifth collection of which has recently been published; Avis Rosenberg, freelance art historian and critic as well as the curator of *Pork Roasts,* a traveling exhibit of 250 feminist cartoons; and Trina Robbins, the so-called "first lady of underground comix" who, in fact, is no longer content with the sex/dope/violence themes of the underground press. Rounding out the list of panel participants was M.G. Lord, who signs her name as such, rather than the full "Mary Grace Lord," not, she assured the audience, because she doesn't want to be revealed as a woman, but because she doesn't want "to be mistaken for an agent of the Vatican!" Lord, a political cartoonist for *Newsday* whose work is distributed by the Universal Press Syndicate, proved to be as outspoken and witty in person as she is in print.

Underlying the panel's general air of levity, however, was a serious attempt to come to grips with the problems facing women in the cartooning field. Panel members cited the lack of female role models as a major inhibitor in the development of their own self-image as cartoonists, though they themselves—pioneers in many ways—are beginning to rectify the situation for future generations.

Noticeable by their absence on the panel were Marie Severin, longtime Marvel artist, and Jan Duursema, whose work on DC's *Arion* has been turning many a head in comics fandom. Though both had been scheduled to appear, event coordinator Ron Wolin was at a loss to explain Severin's no-show while Duursema was faced with a deadline.

There was virtually unanimous agreement that the alternative press is the wave of the future — especially for female artists, as they tend to emphasize personal interaction in their work rather than the all-too-familiar power-exploits of the mainstream's costumed musclemen. Robbins doubted she could exist as a cartoonist without the alternatives — a frightening revelation, given the quality and popularity of her work. Admittedly, however, there can be disadvantages to alternative or self-publishing, and as Lord was quick to point out, though her syndicated work does involve a certain degree of compromise, "the trade-off is cash and exposure."

Although no one can deny the growing impact of the female perspective on the themes, style, and appeal of today's cartoon and comic art press, it is clear that the women in the field must continue an uphill struggle.

—Diana Schutz

DC COMICS

New Titles Scheduled for 1983

In a spate of announcements made at a preview discussion at Creation Convention's 12th Anniversary show, DC Comics outlined further plans for 1983 -including several new titles.

Two of them will be straight superhero adventures. *Blue Devil,* first mentioned in issue three, is now on the schedule for the second-half of the year. Created by Gerry Conway and Dan Mishkin, the Blue Devil is a superhero who discovers that once he puts on his costume, it can't come off. Paris Cullins, a highly-touted newcomer, has already completed pencils for a preview insert and is now working on the first issue.

The second title is *Zero Man,* a co-creation of Len Wein and Gil Kane. It's monthly and will also debut later this year.

New Talent Showcase is the working title for another book which will debut this summer. The exact format hasn't been determined, but it will either be four eight-page adventure stories, no ads or three eight-page stories with ads. The first issue was packaged by Marv Wolfman and Ernie Colon.

For several months, Roy Thomas has been quietly working on a new mini-series, *Iron Thunder,* involving a female detective with some mysterious power based in Los Angeles. She will not be related to Johnny Thunder of Justice Society fame or the western hero of the same name. Ernie Colon has been tentatively named artist.

Another on-going series will be *Atari Force,* a monthly newsstand book spinning-off from the comics produced for Atari video games. The team book will be written by Gerry Conway and illustrated by Jose Luis Garcia-Lopez in his first regular assignment.

Also announced, finally, were plans for Frank Miller's mini-series, *Ronin* will premiere around April; tentative scheduling calls for six issues released six weeks apart in the Baxter format used on *Camelot 3000.*

Batman and the Outsiders was previewed at the convention by writer Mike W. Barr, artist Jim Aparo and editor Len Wein. The new characters consist of Geo-Force, a man with earth-powers; Katana, a female samurai; and Halo, a mysterious woman wielding heat and light powers. Returning to active duty are Black Lightning and Metamorpho. Geo-Force's powers sound extremely similar to Terra's abilities in the Teen Titans and Barr promised all will be explained in the cross-over story circa *Outsiders #4.*

Americomics to Premiere in January

Bill Black, editor/publisher of *Fun Comics*, announced a full line of comic books to be published under the corporate name, AC Comics. The flagship title will be *Americomics* and it will be supported by two other titles at present. All three books will be printed in the now-popular standard comic book size on Baxter paper.

Black's *Fun Comics* will become one of the other two titles to be published under AC. The long-running comic will continue to feature Paragon Press characters including Phantom Lady, Captain Paragon and Commando D. This book will run on a semi-annual basis for now.

The other title is *Black Diamond* and will represent the first alternative press comic company to tie-in with a motion picture. Black Diamond, really Tiana Mathews, is a super spy in the Modesty Blaise school. The film, originally intended as a vehicle for Sybil Danning, is due this summer featuring Lois Arena. Issue #1 will be an introductory story and then issues #2 and #3 will adapt the film. Paul Gulacy will provide covers beginning with issue #2. Black will script the series and ink Mark Beachum's pencils. The comic will start off as a quarterly.

Americomics will be a bi-monthly showcase title, highlighted by the use of Charlton superheroes. A good portion of the material is left over from Charlton Bullseye which the firm stopped publishing last year. Captain Atom, Blue Beetle and others will be resurrected by fans-turned-pros Dan Reed, Martin L. Green and Rik Levins. Other creations will also be used including Black's The Shade and The Messenger, created by *All-Star Squadron* artist Jerry Ordway. Ordway has also contributed the inks to The Slayer, a character written by Craig Zablo and pencilled by *Captain America* inker John Beatty.

Covers for *Americomics* will be done by George Perez, Gil Kane, Pat Broderick, Jerry Ordway, Bill Black and Mike Machlon.

RED CIRCLE COMICS

Plans Firming Up; 6 Books Slated for 1983

Rich Buckler has been placed in charge of all creative work on the Red Circle comics with John Carbonaro moving over to an administrative position. Buckler outlined the plans for the line in November with the first issue of *Mighty Crusaders* still set for a January premiere.

Might Crusaders: After the first issue, the title will be written by Gary Burkett and will continue to be drawn by Buckler.

The Fly: This book premieres in February and features a plot by Jack C. Harris, dialogue by Buckler and art by Jim Sherman. Jim Staranko is slated to do the first cover. David Singer will begin scripting with issue two.

The Shield: Although unscheduled, this book is next on Buckler's list. The first issue will feature an Alan Weiss/John Severin cover and the story will be written by Stan Timmons with Weiss art.

The Black Hood: Gary Morrow has done the art for Steve Ringerberg's story for the book and Alex Toth has contributed a second story and the cover to issue one

The Web: Charlie Boatner will script this series and art will be by Lou Manna and Frank Giacoia. There will be two back-up features- Bullseye by Timmons and Toth and The Fox by Timmons with art by Al McWilliams

The Comet: The line-up also includes three features although no creative team has been set for either The Comet or Steel Sterling. Jack Harris may script The Comet, although no contracts have been signed. Ken Fenders will do an SF-strip called the Falcon Elite.

Buckler added that the supernatural Mr. Justice will return in 1983. Trevor Von Eeden has already completed pencilling one story.

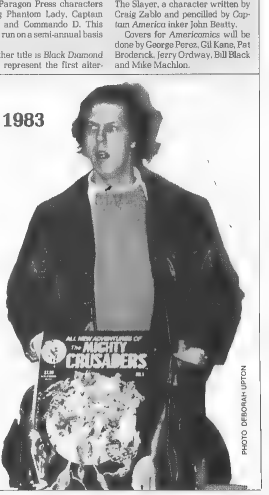


PHOTO: DIRONIAN-UPTON

Rich Buckler describes the forthcoming Red Circle line at the Thanksgiving Creation Convention. He has been named editor of the line, beginning with six bi-monthly titles and soon to expand into magazines, special projects and movie adaptations.

Don McGregor & Gene Colan Set for Mini-Series

Don McGregor at a recent convention.

Don McGregor has signed with DC to write a four issue mini-series to be edited by Dick Giordano and penciled by Gene Colan for release later this year.

The project is entitled *Nathaniel Dusk*. This hard-boiled private detective story takes place in 1934, and represents a departure for both DC and McGregor: this is DC's first "realistic" story in years and McGregor's first work for the company.

McGregor explains that Dusk has lurked in the back alleys of his mind for more than a year-and-a-half. He had even mentioned to Colan that one day, time permitting, he'd wanted to do *Dusk* with the artist. Then, last September, McGregor found himself in a situation quite familiar to most freelancers: "I had done a lot of writing for people but no money was coming in yet," he explains.

He was advised by artists Tom Sutton and Colan that DC was receptive to new ideas and McGregor should sound the company out. In a meeting with V.P./executive Editor Dick Giordano, *Dusk* came up and Giordano, to McGregor's surprise, said he wanted to see it.

After three weeks, McGregor turned in a proposal. Giordano made some suggestions, and sent the author off to produce a full treatment on the character, the era and the storyline. McGregor took a month to research the period, and assembled a 66-page treatment which contained almost every plot element as well as photo references and historical fact—all to be used in the series.

DC President/Publisher Jenette Kahn offered some suggestions. Giordano gave McGregor the go-ahead and the four-issue, Baxter book was approved. McGregor handed in the first script in late November.

Dusk is a former cop who left the ranks of the police force during the Great Depression, giving up steady employment to protect his remaining ideals. As a private investigator, he did the dreary legwork and took the uninteresting assignments as they came along. Then came a case which hit him too close to home, and that's where the mini-series and the DC story of Nathaniel Dusk begins.

RADIO

Doc Savage Headed for NPR

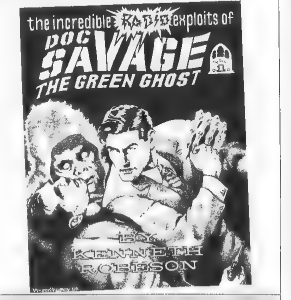
One of the greatest pulp adventure heroes of the '30s may soon return as the star of a new radio series to be broadcast by National Public Radio.

Ironically, the new series came about as a result of the discovery by author and pulp historian, Will Murray, of 26 scripts written by Doc's creator, Lester Dent, for the now-forgotten 1934 *Doc Savage* radio show. Murray, in addition to acting as the literary agent for the Lester Dent estate, is perhaps best known for his well-received *Duende History of the Shadow Magazine*. When Murray announced the publication of *The Incredible Radio Exploits of Doc Savage* in two volumes, the existence of these scripts came to the attention of Roger Rittner Productions, creators of *Midnight*, currently airing on National Public Radio. Rittner, a Doc Savage fan, secured permission from the copyright holders to recreate Dent's scripts for NPR. However, problems with the length of the 15-minute episodes made them unsuitable for NPR. Rittner's solution was to adapt Dent's original pulp novels.

Plans call for a 13-week series to be broadcast in spring 1983. In addition to producing and directing the series, which will be set in the '30s, Rittner will script *Fear Cay*, one of two novels chosen for broadcast. Murray will adapt *The Thousand-Headed Man*. Both novels will be serialized with each 30-minute segment ending in a cliffhanger. "I see this series as being the radio equivalent of 1930s-40s movie serials," explains Rittner, "we should leave Doc or somebody in real jeopardy or confusion at the end of each episode."

In the meantime, Doc Savage fans won't be missing out on Lester Dent's original scripts. *The Incredible Radio Exploits of Doc Savage* Vol. 1, featuring 14 new Doc stories, is available from Odyssey Publications, P.O. Box G-146, Greenwood, MA 01880 for $10.70 postpaid. The second volume is set for mid-1983, in time to coincide with the new series and with the 50th anniversary of Doc Savage's creation. Murray's discovery of these episodes—which are not adapted from the pulp novels—is the second unearthing he's made of lost Doc Savage material. In 1978, he discovered a lost Doc novel, *The Red Spider*, which was published by Bantam Books as a paperback original.

Although most remembered as the star of 181 novels first published in Street & Smith's *Doc Savage Magazine*, and the best selling Bantam reprints, the Man of Bronze has had a checkered career in other media. The 1975 George Pal film starring Ron Ely was a bomb. There were two radio series, one in 1934 and the other in 1943, and four separate comic book versions, the most successful of which was Marvel's *Doc Savage* black and white magazine. Despite the fact that Doc has been cited as a major influence on the seminal comic characters of Superman and Batman, among others, and that he is often called "the first superhero" (ads for the 1934 radio show actually called him a superhero), the character has never had a successful incarnation outside of Lester Dent's pulp novels. When NPR broadcasts the new *Adventures of Doc Savage* this spring, the Man of Bronze may finally receive the treatment he deserves.



Movie Notes

Sheena, Queen of the Jungle will finally swing into production over the summer. John Guillermin has been named to direct with Paul Aratow producing. Aratow told Steve Swires that they spent the end of 1982 scouting locations in Africa. Guillermin, fans may call, directed *King Kong*, *Death on the Nile* and was recently fired from *Sahara*. . . Production also began on *Greystoke*, the authoritative Tarzan film from Warner Brothers. Casting was not announced at presstime although a french actor unknown to American audiences was rumored as the lead. Rick Baker, the Academy Award winning make-up wizard, is spending a year on the project developing the ultimate ape suits. The film, based on a highly-praised script by Robert Towne, will be directed by Hugh Hudson (*Chariots of Fire*) and will be released at Christmas time . . . Plans continue for the *Batman* film. Tom Mankiewicz's script has been completed and accepted by producers Michael Uslan and Ben Melniker. . . Next issue we will be providing the most up-to-date report on movies in production involving comic book and comic strip characters. Be here.

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ANIMATION

Conjuring up New Magic at Disney

After nearly a three month hiatus during the industry-wide animator's strike, the Disney animators have returned to their easels with renewed enthusiasm to complete and begin quite a number of film projects. And there is quite a lot happening in the Disney drawing rooms for the artists to get excited about.

Disney has recently acquired the rights to Thomas Disch's Hugo award winning short story, *The Brave Little Toaster*, which will be the first animated feature to make extensive use of the new computer technology. Together with MAGI, the Disney studios are experimenting with computer generated backgrounds incorporating complicated camera moves to give the Disney character animators a powerful new tool that is in many ways more revolutionary than the multi-plane camera. Experiments have recently been conducted using material from Maurice Sendak's *Where the Wild Things Are*. John Lassiter, director of *The Brave Little Toaster*, characterizes computer assisted animation as "the next step. In contrast to the use of Xerox process, which though it was a technical advancement for animation, a lot of quality was lost, this technical advancement [computer assisted animation] will allow us to achieve a level of quality and three-dimensional realism undreamed of before. I think Walt would have loved it."

The strike did force the delay of *Mickey's Christmas Carol* until next Christmas, but producer Joe Hale has now inherited most of the animators from that project for *The Black Cauldron*, which is now slated for Christmas of 1985 release. Production on *Cauldron* is nearly beginning to build as producer Hale expects the number of animators working on the film to slowly increase to a full staff of 150. Of the project Hale says, "*Cauldron* is probably more complicated than anything we've done since *Pinocchio*. The subject matter demands a very high level of quality and should have a 'rich' look, therefore it has been decided to use quite a lot of hand inking rather than Xerox in many instances in order to achieve the quality we think this picture deserves."

Indicative of the new spirit of excitement that has begun to enfuse the Disney animators was a fascinating seven minute piece of sophisticated stop motion animation entitled *Vincent*. The film was released in certain areas with the Disney live action feature Tex. *Vincent* is an intriguing effort by Tim Burton to imagine himself as being Vincent Price. Filled with bizare imagery, the film was born out of the ashes of *Trick or Treat*, a project of Disney artists Tim Burton and Rick Heinrichs that was recently scrapped. Out of that research was born *Vincent*, filmed in a mixed media of puppets, models, clay and traditional animation, many people believe the film to be easy Academy Award material. The film was written designed and directed by Tim Burton, sculpted and produced by Rick Heinrichs and animated by Steve Chuda

ART © 1983 WALT DISNEY PRODUCTIONS

Mickey and Uncle Scrooge in Mickey's Christmas Carol, coming for Christmas, 1983.

Disney effects animation department is putting the finishing touches of magic on Bradbury's *Something Wicked This Way Comes*. Nearly $3,000,000 is being devoted to post production special effects including special Richard Taylor/MAGI computer effects and more traditional effects animation. Postproduction effects are being supervised by Lee Dyer, who was involved with *TRON*. Expect nothing that looks like *TRON* however, because already the *TRON* technology is old hat at Disney. The film is now slated for May/June 1983 release.

Elsewhere in the animator's hands are two projects: *Basil of Baker Street* and *Who Censored Roger Rabbit? Basil* is a full animation feature about a mouse that just happens to live under the residence of that great master of deduction Sherlock Holmes. *Roger Rabbit* is a live action/animation film based on the recent novel by Gary Wolf. The story involves a "Bogart" detective character and several cartoon fantasy characters that live side-by-side with real life people.

With this and other projects in development, there seems to be a lot of excitement brewing on the Disney lot. Much credit should be given to Tom Wilhite, the studio's new head of production, for encouraging experimentation and initiative.

ANIMATION

Fresh Japanese Films for Cable-TV

For those who enjoy Japanese animated features, New Hope Entertainment is planning to make 1983 their year. Headed by Bob Marcello (the man responsible for bringing *Starblazers* to the U.S.), New Hope is working with Ken Fujita (the producer of *Speed Racer*) to bring as many Toei Pictures to the states as possible.

The first one will be aired early next year on Showtime. *Starbirds* is the story of an invaded, crippled Earth, and the gigantic robot which, along with its operator and dedicated crew, are the planet's only chance to repel the enemy.

Two additional features, *Voltus V* and *UFO*, are ready to go. The only thing anyone is waiting for is a final tally on the bidding. "Showtime wanted all the product we could supply them," says Marcello, "but there are local independent stations willing to pay as much for these features as Showtime was for national rights, but we'll be making our final decisions soon."

What may be a stumbling block to sales is that *Voltus V* and *UFO* are also the stories of an invaded, crippled Earth, and two more gigantic robots which, along with their operators and dedicated crews are the planet's only chance. Each of the features runs pretty much the same course, aliens invade Earth, Earth forces are defeated, brave band of independents with the giant robot they have built for just such a time comes forward, brash young man with a lot of hair takes charge of the robot, someone falls in love, and the aliens are beaten. Of course, action series emerging from the same mold is nothing new. The deciding factor in the success/failure race for these Toei features will be their quality.

This they have. *Starbirds* is as skillfully animated as anything else in the marketplace today. The voices were chosen with great care, and the soundtrack is better than those found in the average Japanese import. The only drawback may rest in the editing job done here. Once again, in preparing a Japanese feature for American distribution, the violence and action scenes have been greatly minimized, at least on the level of the human characters. The audience is served up shot after shot of the robots slugging their way through this and that, with alien machinery exploding and imploding to everyone's heart's content. But, in the scenes involving human death and pain, the editing seems a bit heavy-handed.

Marcello explains that sadly, the pressure groups which we do not hear about anymore, still exist and rise up regularly whenever they spot what they consider to be an excess of morbid action and death — even in animation.

Whatever the drawbacks, however, Marcello promises that the next few years will see a dramatic increase in the number of Japanese features to be imported to this country. Whether they will be seen here intact or not, remains to be seen.

—Chris Henderson

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Eclipse to Publish John Law & DNAgents; Voyages to Debut

ECLIPSE ENTERPRISES

One of the many new projects coming from Dean and Jan Mullaney involves a character Will Eisner created and put aside more than 30 years ago. Eisner did three stories featuring a detective named John Law and a new comic book was all set to go until it was scrapped after the failure of *Baseball* and *Newpics*. The stories were reworked into Eisner's *Spirit* series including the two-part Sand Saref tale. Now, Eclipse will publish *John Law* as originally intended in a 32-page Baxter comic, to be released in March. Eisner has inked a cover for the book that he originally pencilled 1948. The $1.50 comic will contain an introduction by Cat Yronwode.

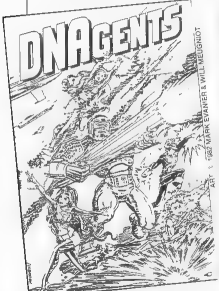
Also coming in March is the first issue of the *DNAgents*, created by Mark Evanier and Will Meugniot. The storyline involves five beings created by "the company," imbued with special powers and abilities that will make them the perfect obedient soldiers. The five beings, two female, three male, break ranks and strike out on their own. The Baxter comic will be Eclipse's first monthly title.

Volume Two of the *Comics Hall of Fame* will be a Steve Ditko retrospective, compiled by Mark Upchurch. The 136-page volume will be heavily-illustrated including three obscure stories from Ditko's days at Charlton in the 1950s. A complete checklist will be included and for people who purchase the limited-edition hardcover, there will be a new color plate by Ditko, signed and numbered. Dean Mullaney proudly says that Ditko will be receiving royalties from this book and is cooperating in every way. This volume should be out in June.

Sobre and *Eclipse Magazine* are both going to Baxter formats. *Sobre*, with #4, and *Eclipse* with #9 later this year. While *Sobre* will resemble *Scorpio Rose* and *Destroyer Duck* at 32 pages for $1.50, Eclipse will be 48 pages for $2 and features superhero-type stories. (Continued on page 28)

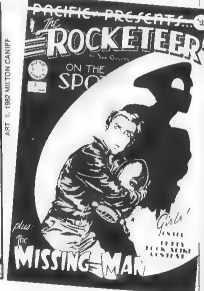
ART © 1982 LELA DOWLING
DON'T WE OFTEN DREAM WITHOUT THE LEAST SUSPICION OF UNREALITY ?
IT TALKS!
IM NOT AN IT - IM A CHESHIRE CAT!
ART © 1982 TRINA ROBBINS
I SETTLED BACK WITH FOG AND THE PAPER. IT HAD BEEN A NORMAL DAY IN SAN FRANCISCO.
Sigh
San Francisco Ch
ALIEN STARSHIP LA
IN GHIRADELLI SQU
FIVE TOURISTS AND CABLE CAR SQUASHED

Two samples from Voyages #1. Top left is Trina Robbins' "Queenie Hart and the Andromedan Grabich." Lela Dowling contributes "Cheshire Cat," top right.



Will Meugniot's pencils for Eclipse's first monthly.

Cover to Steve Canyon Magazine #1.



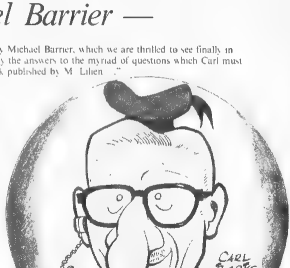
The Rocketeer returns this winter.

Carl Barks and the Art of the Comic Book

— *by Michael Barrier* —

"Thank you for the copy of *Carl Barks and the Art of the Comic Book* by Michael Barrier, which we are thrilled to see finally in published form. It was worth the years of waiting, and we hope will supply the answers to the myriad of questions which Carl must answer thousands of times over. Now he can just say buy the Barrier book published by M. Lihen ..."

Garé Barks
(Mrs. Carl Barks)



"*Carl Barks and the Art of the Comic Book* is the very long-awaited biography, bibliography, critique of the Good Artist's work by Michael Barrier. It is published in a handsome, sturdy, well-designed hardcover edition by M. Lihen of New York, with a lovely dust jacket featuring a self-caricature of Barks on the front and a color photo of the Duck Man on the back. Inside you will find a detailed account of Barks' life and career, with each story discussed and highlighted. There are many photos of Barks as a young man, sketches and cartoons he did for the Calgary *Eye-Opener* and as inter-office gags at the Disney Studios ...

If you are a fan of Carl Barks, you simply, absolutely, positively and unquestionably must have this book and right now. If you are a comic-book student, you must have this book to see how thoroughly and well comics can and should be studied ..."

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This beautifully illustrated book captures the essence of Carl Barks: the man who brought Donald Duck into the hearts of a generation of Americans. Only Michael Barrier, who is uniquely familiar with both Barks's life and works, could assemble this definitive introduction to Barks's creations.

Barrier traces Barks's life as a young cartoonist who eventually joined the Walt Disney Studios during the depression. Upon joining the Western Publishing Company in 1942, Barks produced vivid tales which captured comic book readers' imaginations for the following two decades. Barks brought to life such unforgettable characters as Uncle Scrooge, the Beagle Boys, and the other zany inhabitants of Duckburg. Although Barks's art was readily accessible to children, his stories contained satire aimed at the foibles of a nation immersed in the Cold War and new-found material success.

In addition to chronicling Barks's life, this book provides a definitive bibliography of Barks's works. The bibliography is enhanced by quotations from Barks on specific works as well as comments from Kim Weston.

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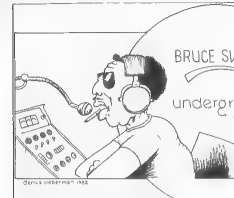

Logo this issue is by Boston-based Dennis Lieberman, who collaborated with me earlier this year for his "madman voyage" in Kitchen's *Bop!* #1.

LAST GASP

Got one last difficult Xmas gift to get? Ron Turner says that he's reprinting the *Dealer McDope* game at $16.95 as designed by the late David Sheridan. You might also consider the *Zippy* calendar or the *Jokes for Jerks* calendar, 9" x 12", $4.95 and loaded with sick jokes with a Jay Kinney cover.

Crumb's *Weirdo* #6 should be out just about now as well as *Mickey Rat* #4 by Bob Armstrong. Another title printed and distributed by Last Gasp for $1.50 is *Army Surplus Comics* by Richard Lester. The *Zap* artists i e. Wilson, Skelton, Moscoso, etc. will be looking for a publisher soon; possibly Last Gasp.

Speaking of Wilson, he exhibited his works at the Museum of the Surreal Fantastique in N.Y.C. in September and October. He had a chance to drop into our offices and chat with some of our editors; fans of Wilson from way back.

RIP-OFF PRESS

Elsewhere in San Francisco, Rip-Off Press came out with *Rip-Off Comix* #11; the first full magazine signed edition, featuring a gorgeous color Freak Brothers insert, a Wonder Warthog story and additional material from the Dutch Undergrounders.

Additionally, they've reissued a revised edition of the *Adventures of Fat Freddy's Cat*, designed and edited by Guy Colwell; who has joined Rip-Off and has been having a lot of exhibits in the San Francisco area

Spain claims that he'll be doing a 5 page Trashman story for an upcoming *Weirdo* and had his Trashman character in a San Francisco paper. "Appeal to Reason." He has a great tongue-in-cheek contemporary superhero spoof called "Fachmo vs Armageddonman" running weekly in the *San Francisco Bay Guardian*. He's also been doing huge outdoor murals outside of Sonoma, Ca. (I've been wondering, is it O.K. again to refer to the town as "Frisco"?) Larry Todd writes that he'll probably be illustrating up to 200 pages of Larry Niven's *Ringworld, the Graphic Novel*, premiering in Epic next year.

EDUCOMICS

(P.O. Box 40246, S.F., CA 94140)

I can't say enough about this line. *Food First* is #1 and includes first rate presentations by Rifas and Rippee with an excellent Steve LeiaLoha cover. They also have *Food Comics* out which includes Boxell, Crumb, Diggs, LeiaLoha, Rippee and Trina Robbins. It retails for only $1.25 and is an informative yet entertaining item that deals with nutrition, health and the food industry. Leonard Rifas always adds the aspect of a conscience to Comix while continually producing a tasteful package of material.

PASTIME PRODUCTIONS

(Box 19818, Portland, OR 97219)

Monday Funnies #9 came out recently for $1.50 with a color cover. They are open to additional cartooning for up-coming titles such as *Portland U.G. Comix* #3, *Shocking Fear* #2 and *Girls Galore* #1, all standard 7" x 10" with color covers

Truss recently helped Comics & Comix of Berkeley, CA celebrate their 10th year anniversary. Happy Birthday, C & C. . . Bob Conway writes that fanzine *Realm* #8 will be out by early '83 with 32 pages 7" x 10" and a full color cover by Darryl Anderson; formerly staff artist for the defunct comix fanzine, *Cascade*. *Cascade* could possibly resurface under new management, but nothing's settled there. Meanwhile, Bruce Chrislip of Ohio is developing a quarterly project that will concentrate on u.g.'s: *The City Limits Gazette*. . . Lane Wolf is a mini available from George Kochell, 5432 Main Street #4; E. Petersburg, PA 17520 for $1. . . Ed Devore has three minis for 50¢ each and a stamp from him at RD #7, DeVore Road, Meadville, PA 16335.

Four-fisted Tales is a new title out from the Comics Conservatory, done by R. Kelley and Annette Wagner (c/o Teater and Etc.; 405 Ortega Avenue, Mountain View, CA 94040). It retails for $1.25; it is clearly inspired by the old E.C. *Two-Fisted Tales* and has more than faint traces of Bode to it. Recommended.

Howski Studios; P.O. Box 804, Longhorne, PA 19047 has *Rock Horror 3*; available for $2.00 p.p. 8 1/2 x 10", 32 pages featuring a pair of Rock'n'roll murder mysteries by Matt Howarth. Strong interior.

Deprived #2 will run 48 pages with 32 pages of comix retailing for $2.25. (New Wave Publishing, P.O. Box 1187, Woodhaven, N.Y. 11421) and is due out February-March.

Rick Geary, P.O. Box 99835, San Diego, CA 92109, has a set of 12 different postcards available, including 2 for Xmas at 25¢ each or 1 dozen each at 21¢. He also has a 11"x 17" Presidential Poster for $2.50.

David Stanford at 906 Spruce St., Berkeley, CA 94701 has been churning out home-made books loaded with visual puns for years for a subscription rate of $5. You're guaranteed at least 3 a year - often more. Back issues are also available.

SPACE: THE SILENT AIRLESS VOID WHICH SEPERATES THE GALAXIES IN ONE ALL ENCOMPASSING INTER-STELLA VACUUM OF NOTHINGNESS....
ART © BRAD BUTLER'S 'N' POMMO
AND THEN THE SOLUTION OF THIS VAST COSMIC VACUITY LAND A PENETRAN ED IN A GLEAMING PROJECTILE...
A VIEW INSIDE THE MAMMOTH-BUT STRANGELY FAMILIAR SHAPED VESSEL SLOWLY REVEALS A VIEW OF THE COSMIC DRAMA ABOUT TO UNFOLD...
WE ARE APPROACHING EARTH'S ATMOSPHERE UNIT 1/ OKAY IS OUR MISSION HERE?
OUR MISSION IS TO RETRIEVE SPECIAL EARTHLING AND TRANSPORT THE SAME TO THE HOME PLANET FOR TESTING AND STUDIES.
ART © 1982 STEVE LEIALOHA
TAMMY
IS SHE/HE BROUGHT HIM A NEGAVI TAMAN?
BOOGER!
Left: A page from "Bull Buster," appearing in Depraved #2. Art and story are by D. Rufogle and F. Romano. Right: Opening page from "Vitaman," a 1980 story by Leonard Rifas and Steve Lelaloha, now appearing in Food Comics #1. The entire magazine is filled with informative facts about food, eating and good table manners.

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Why would anyone want to draw a 300-issue story about an aardvark? And why would anyone want to marry the artist and publish a 300-issue story about an aardvark? How do they work together and who gets to clean up after the aardvark?

Join us for . . .

Part One
Dave & Deni Sim

By DAVID McDONNELL

An interview with comics creator Dave Sim is a performance.

Especially when he's joined by his wife/publisher Deni Sim for a candid conversation on comics.

Together, as Aardvark-Vanaheim Press, the Sims pioneered the field of alternative comics publishing in North America (fellow pioneers Wendy and Richard Pini of *Elfquest* and Jack Katz of *The First Kingdom* were previously profiled in COMICS SCENE #7 and 3-4). Together, they produce one of today's most innovative, successful graphic series, *Cerebus the Aardvark*. And together, as this interview indicates, they can be dramatically serious or a comedy act on the road.

The young Canadian couple, who live in Kitchener, Ontario, are the keepers of the sword-slinging "funny animal" involved in human wars, politics and intrigues. Although it began in 1977 as a parody of a certain Robert E. Howard-created barbarian, the comic has evolved into an unique graphic fantasy. Cerebus is far more than just Conan in an aardvark suit. For one thing, he's shorter and covered with gray fur.

Dave is the creator/writer/artist/inker/letterer responsible for the character and his monthly adventures. Deni, as publisher, handles the business end, supervising the monthly *Cerebus* and the continuing reprint collections of *Swords of Cerebus*. She is also initiating three new non-Sim projects: Michael T. Gilbert's *Strange Brew*, Arn Saba's *Neil the Horse*, and Bill Loibs' *Wolverine McAlister* (see Comics Reporter).

Our talk took place in a nondescript motel room just outside Baltimore, Maryland in the midst of their first American personal appearance tour. After ordering coffee from Room Service, we relaxed in comfy chairs to talk of shoes, of socks, of ceiling wax, but mostly of aardvarks.

COMICS SCENE: What were you doing before *Cerebus*?

DAVE SIM: A lot of fanzine work, my weekly Canadian comic strip "The Beavers,"

ALL ART © 1982 DAVE SIM

Above: A 1982 *Cerebus* cover gallery displays the full creative range of Dave Sim's artistry.

single illustrations — our coffee didn't arrive yet. No, straighten up, c'mon, this is COMICS SCENE. The big time. Bright lights. Big city.

CS: Mass circulation.

DAVE: Shut up! This is my interview. (laughter) I just learned Hal Schuster — emphasis on the "sh" — is publishing *Revolt 3000*, the last full comic book I did before Cerebus, very Marvel Comics. I tried to draw it to look like Neal Adams inked by Dick Giordano. I did five different characters in 12-page, first chapters of longer stories, set on Earth and elsewhere in the year 3000. And it was like, "Hey! I know I can draw all this stuff on schedule. This is what I want to do for the rest of my life." At that point, in 1977, I had *Phantaces*. *Revolt 3000* — which wasn't published—and a story I did with Gene Day all coming out at once. I decided I wanted another full comic book done by me to show everyone.

CS: Was your goal to go to Marvel and DC and say, "Hey, look these over"?

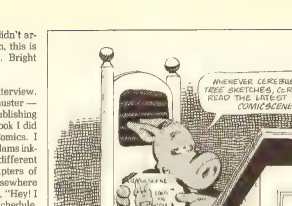
DAVE: Yes, in the back of my head, there was that feeling. At this point in the interview, Dave Sim takes off his shoes — be sure you tell everyone that right here.

CS: And he wears light blue socks.

DAVE: With holes. Marvel was in the back of my mind, and I thought it would be best to publish this whole full comic book myself for my samples package. I had already designed an Aardvark-Vanaheim logo for Deni's Vanaize with this cartoon aardvark in it. That drawing eventually appeared on the back of *Cerebus* #1. Deni and I discussed taking this Cerebus the Aardvark character and doing a book. I had submitted a sample page to Mike Friedrich at *Star**Reach. He felt *Quack* — which I thought might use Cerebus—didn't have a direction, and he was right.

I realized Mike had pretty much missed the boat on what made *Howard the Duck* successful. It wasn't like people suddenly went crazy over ducks, though we all love Daffy Duck. Donald Duck is another story and not quite as good. With *Howard*, it was the idea of a funny animal in today's world of humans. So, the obvious thing for me would be either a science-fiction or a barbarian funny animal. I don't like science fiction a whole lot. I don't have much affection for fantasy and sword and sorcery either, but I had a bizarre idea: a Barry Smith-style funny animal. Mike Friedrich sent my sample page back and said that he didn't see any commercial potential in it.

Mike had rejected the aardvark, and I wanted to take my own shot at publishing. Why not *Cerebus*? I had already put a reasonable amount of thought into the premise, Deni and I decided to do three bimonthly issues because fans' major complaints are that such publications don't come out often enough or on schedule. That was our major priority: three issues in six months, then continue if it worked or stop and include those issues in the samples showing the range of comics I could do.


WHENEVER CEREBUS IS BETWEEN TREE SKETCHES, CEREBUS LIKES TO READ THE LATEST ISSUE OF COMICSCENE.
©1982 - Dave Sim
for Bob in his boys 'n' girls

CS: Deni, you originally met Dave when planning to brng out a fanzine.

DAVE: Oh, sure! Talk to *her* now!

DENI SIM: At the time, I had not very serious—looking at it now—aspirations to be a writer. My brother Michael, sister Karen and I would get together, write and critique each other's work.? We decided to try to publish our own fanzine, modeled after Gene Day's *Dark Fantasy*. I got elected to get it done and went to the local comics chop, Now and Then Books, to talk to the owner about buying copies. He wasn't there, but Dave, who worked in the shop, was, and we started a two-hour conversation about writing and publishing. He wrote down his number — "If you need some help with the fanzine, give me a call." And I looked at the paper, "You're *the* Dave Sim, the one whose artwork is in *Dark Fantasy*? Oh, wow! I really like your stuff."

DAVE: I put on my sunglasses, said, "Here's an autograph. Get lost." (laughter)

CS: Was Deni your first fan?

DAVE: No. But it was the first time I ever met one that way. December 16, 1976.

DENI: I was living very independent at the time because I had just moved into my own apartment and invited him over for supper. From there, we started planning the magazine, which was to be called *Cerberus*, but I spelled it *Cerebus*. We talked to Karen and Michael because our publishing company *had* to have a name.

DAVE: This is Dave bringing in real official stuff. *Dark Fantasy* was published by Shadow Press, so we needed a name like that.

DENI: We all believed him. He'd been published. Karen suggested Aardvark; Michael, Vanaheim.

DAVE: Dave Sim, career diplomat, suggested Aardvark-Vanaheim. I have to live with the in-laws.

DENI: Vanaheim is from Norse mythology.

CS: It's the place you go for beers?

DENI: For the rest of eternity.

DAVE: If you've been a good warrior—

DENI: You party forever.

CS: Good move. Why the decision to become publishers?

DENI: Dave was really working hard on these books for other publishers, taking a lot of crap, and not getting much money. I can remember him showing one script to me, reams of notes describing the characters who "had" to look like specific actors in specific movies.

DAVE: I didn't mind that movie star stuff, it was what I was told to check out a medieval painting and make someone look like the third character on the left. . .

DENI: It was insane. And it was obvious that if we wanted to avoid such editorial situations and to make any money, we would have to publish Cerebus ourselves.

DAVE: I had grown very tired of arbitrary judgments and editorial directions. Somebody would suggest a change which would make it into a different story. Maybe it was better, maybe it was worse, but it certainly wasn't mine.

DENI: I knew Dave could do better on his own. At the time, we were living together, because, basically, it seemed like a good way for me to help out. In fact, I worked full time until issue #14. Cerebus was something I did nights and weekends. I've always had a very big conviction that if you're an artist, you *shouldn't* have to worry about rent. I grew up wanting to be the somebody who made it possible for somebody else to be artistic, though not necessarily in comics because I wasn't "into" comics until I met Dave.

DAVE: Someone like Deni or Richard Pini is very rare. Which is why there aren't

PHOTO: DEBORAH UPTON

Creator Dave Sim and publisher/wife Deni Sim meet their fans at Geppi's Comic World in Silver Spring, Maryland.

YOU SEE, HE STOOD ONLY FIVE HANDS HIGH, HAD A LENGTHY SNOUT, A LONG TAIL AND WAS COVERED WITH SHORT GREY FUR...
HE WAS, IN SHORT...
CEREBUS
THE AARDVARK
©1977 DAVE SIM

The aardvark takes his premier ride into danger in *Cerebus* #1, drawn by Dave Sim in his "Barry Windsor-Smith" period.

many books like Cerebus or *Elfquest*. Thousands of artists out there could do this work if they had the support. Artists get very discouraged, but someone, like Deni or Richard, who doesn't really know "am I nuts or is this good stuff?" — I have a big enough ego to say it's great — must just keep believing that it's marketable and brilliant.

DENI: And sooner or later, everyone else will realize that fact.

CS: Was there feedback after the first two issues?

DENI: Not much. I can remember when one letter a day was a pretty heavy response. And there were problems: checks bounced, books were damaged, refunds. You'd give distributors 30 days to pay, they'd take 60. Unfortunately, the phone company and printers want their money sooner. I wasn't a businesswoman when we began—like I am now. I was just somebody helping out an artist.

DAVE: Cash flow was a problem, as it is for anybody who handles their own business. It doesn't matter that you've got eight checks adding up to $15,000 coming next month, if there are $14,000 in bills due now. These days, the problems and solutions—the bills outnumbered by checks—come in the same mail and are handed to Deni; I get my report card, the fan mail on the latest issues, before I go to work.

My early experiences had given me ideas about how to be a publisher. Not having the time nor the inclination to be one, it was a matter of training Deni to have a set number of publishing viewpoints and then, let her build from there herself.

DENI: Every attitude that I have about publishing is from Dave: why the price; the format; black and white, not color. The big decisions have basically been made by Dave. He has the know-how, far more than I. I can remember him laying out comic books in front of me, explaining very patiently how different artists did different books and how you could tell them apart.

DAVE: For a long time, Deni was a publisher who did what I told her to do. Now, she understands the process and initiates matters herself. Richard Pini also learned publishing on his feet. They're two of this field's most successful publishers, certainly in terms of how the creative personnel feel working for them.

CS: You and Deni and Wendy and Richard Pini have both working (creator/publisher) and personal (husband/wife) relationships. There must be some tension when those angles intersect.

DAVE: Not from me; certainly from Deni (laughter). I'm no problem to live with at all, but Deni can be hell on wheels.

DENI: You take turns. And it's funny when we get together with the Pinis and compare notes.

DAVE: Similar situations crop up. When there's a call from a distributor, he doesn't want to talk to Wendy or me—even if we answer the phone: "Hi, Bud Plant? How's it going? Shipping?? What 'shipping'??? Did we shup you some books? Oh, we *didn't* ship you some books? Invoice number? What's that? No, Deni isn't here."

Where Richard or Deni picks up the phone and goes: "Hello, Bud, No?!?!! Really? You're *kidding*!" Wendy and I listen, wide-eyed and finally they hang up and go into the other room. "Wait a minute! What was that about? Where you went, 'no *kidding*!'? 'Nothing. Just Bud.'" To the artist, it sounds as if Niagara Falls has just dried up, but to the publisher, it's only a minor problem already straightened out. And it's like, let me play with the grown-ups!

CS: You two share an apartment. Dave's studio is one place, your office, elsewhere. Does the work stay at work?

DENI: You bet.

DAVE: I pride myself in having an apartment which doesn't appear to belong to a comic book artist. There are some old DC's Deni's *X-Men*, and a Cerebus figurine in the bedroom and some original art in a closet, but all the rest is in the studio. Our apartment is not where Cerebus is done, though fans have shown up, saying, "I

came all the way from Texas, and I'd really like to see Dave," Sorry. No. That's why we go to conventions, why we're on this tour—so we don't have to do that at home.

Howard Cruse's column on dropping in on Milton Caniff (COMICS SCENE #1) warms my heart. Caniff made the kid feel like a prince, taking the time, talking, telling stories. I think many guys did that back then because they didn't have conventions or other places to go and be the "famous artist" and have groupies throwing themselves at their feet.

DIEN: You wish.

DAVE: Many cartoonists even played golf and got drunk together. It was their way of forming a club and saying, "I know I'm important because I know how few people become comics artists."

If they had had comic book conventions in 1952, Dick Sprang, the *Batman* artist, would be mobbed at one table; Wayne Boring, the *Superman* artist, would be surrounded by hundreds of people at the next table. Over in the corner at a very small table, with just four or five people in front of them, there would be Harvey Kurtzman and Will Eisner. There's a mysticism about superheroes and the top title of the time, whether it's Superman or Batman or Spider-Man or Howard the Duck, they've all been there, the one book everyone defines comics by. But there are always the real off-the-wall artists who never really seem to do that well at the time, but whose following is solid and only increases over the years. That's one reason I want to do *Cerebus* for as many years as I'm going to do the book!

CS: How long will Dave Sim draw *Cerebus*?

DAVE: For 26 years, from 1977 to 2002. Why? Because Eisner did *The Spirit* from 1940 until 1952 and it wasn't enough—he also went to war so it wasn't even 12 years. Many readers feel cheated by that. There are many people, myself included—and I don't mean to fault him for it personally—who feel bad that Harvey Kurtzman is doing *Little Annie Fanny*. I want him doing *Mad Magazine* or *Two-Fisted Tales*, more Kurtzman stuff. I want to see more Will Eisner, too. *The Spirit* is fine, but it's an antique, nostalgia. Whenever I read something new by Eisner, *A Contract with God*, *Life on Another Planet*, I inhale it. I can feel it pouring into my brain and being absorbed. And I don't see nearly as enough Jules Feiffer stuff as I'd like to see. I wish he was doing comic books, too, another *Hostile Man*, the definitive superhero which appeared in *Playboy*. It's what superheroes really are, so I had to rip it off for Moon Roach [parody of Moon Knight/Batman/Captain America] because not enough people have seen it. ,

Cerebus the Counterfeit

In April 1982, a well-organized team of five to seven men, possibly operating out of Detroit, Michigan, dispersed nationwide and sold several hundred counterfeit copies of *Cerebus* #1 to dealers. They netted several thousand dollars (estimates differ widely). Though the names of several suspects have been mentioned to law enforcement agencies, no one, at this time, has been apprehended for any alleged wrongdoing.

COMICS SCENE: What is happening?

DENI SIM: I contacted an American lawyer and he looked into it. The bottom line was what we had expected: it is not illegal in the U.S. to publish the out-of-print issue of *Cerebus* #1. It is an artifact. If you don't have an artifact certified as genuine by an expert *before* you buy it, too bad for you. If you have been duped, it is regrettable. It is not a fraud! It is a copyright infringement, and it would cost us more to prosecute than we could possibly get back.

DAVE SIM: And there's a very good chance that since it was being represented as being published in 1977—but was actually printed in 1982, a judge would rule there's no infringement because a copy of our comic book was not being sold.

DENI: People say the counterfeit was fraud, but it wasn't fraud against us. The FBI told us we are not the injured party. I know how people feel; that's an emotional reaction and it can't go to court.

DAVE: If everybody who bought *Cerebus* counterfeits got together and formed a mass suit against the individual, noting he got $85,000 and there are 85 of us, there'd be a case of fraud. Going individually to the FBI accomplishes nothing—too small an amount is involved.

DENI: I have been warned through sources I will not name that the guy [i.e. the mastermind of the scam] has said he is going to counterfeit *Cerebus* #2 and #3 as well. Because, obviously, we can't stop him. And I'm quite certain he'll do it again

CS: The International Association for Direct Distribution has posted a $1000 reward for information leading to the arrest and conviction of the counterfeiters. And so have you.

DENI: Yes, our $1000 reward lets everyone know that we are willing to put money into this matter but we need people willing to identify the persons involved in court.

DAVE: It was bound to happen eventually that someone would counterfeit comic books, because we are getting into big numbers. Covert empire is the viewpoint of big-league artifact collecting. And anyone paying $20 for something which has $1 printed on the cover is buying an artifact. And if you buy something which has not been authenticated, no one will come to your assistance. If you want a *Cerebus* #1 authenticated, I'll be glad to do so. Just send it to me.

We comic collectors must grow up. If someone says, "oh, yeah, a bunch of mint Action Comics #1's were discovered in somebody's garage in Minneapolis in 1965," unless I can get a letter testifying to that set of circumstances, I won't spend the $550-600 for Action #12. When you talk real money, you must know what you're buying. I'm sorry, but in the real, grown-up, FBI world, it's not Matt Murdock going after these guys and nailing them to 25-30 years in jail. The most anyone will get is a slap on the wrist because, unfortunately, in counterfeiting cases—unless counterfeit money is involved—the best you can get is destruction of the fake goods. That's the way the song is played. So, if you can't afford to pay that kind of money on what may be a phoney comic book, don't buy it.

—David McDonnell

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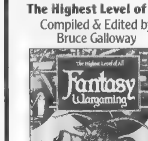

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I feel that 26 years is a long enough time to give the readers. That's 300 issues. Look at the number of comic books which have reached that goal and how they have been assessed. The only attitude I can take is why not do a 300-issue story? Why get to issue #75 and see a new artist rethink it and draw a new origin? Why get to issue #150 and throw out a part of the legend? Then, you have these fans trying to jury-rig everything together so the legend makes sense and it seems really tragic. That's one reason so-called "civilians" can't relate to comics because comics characters don't age. And if you don't age, there's no sense in doing 6000 pages of your adventures. I'm saying yes, *Cerebus* is implausible, ludicrous, and ridiculous, but the 6000 pages of story will hold together. I've almost got 1000 pages done now at issue #50. Since I've begun, the top comics titles have changed. We went through the *Red Sonja* administration, then *Howard the Duck*, The *X-Men*. *Daredevil*, and now *Teen Titans*. Those changes happened because the guy who made it the top book took up his pen and left. That's the difference. I'm *not* going to leave. Maybe *Cerebus* will never get big enough, but you have to put in your dues, and I'll be there paying them.

CS: Do you have a long-range, 300-issue, master blueprint?

DAVE: Well, there are stories I want to do: a Joan of Arc series where Cerebus meets a character who hears voices in her head. "You are the chosen person. You will lead your people to great conquests." He won't be the one to make everything happen unlike "High Society" (*Cerebus* #25-50). There, he's the center of attention for a very specific faction which has placed him in opposition to Lord Julius' plans for lest.

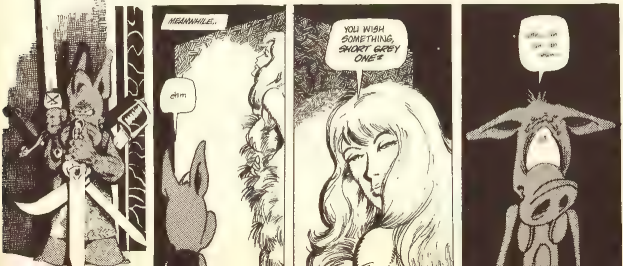
There are little touchstones here and there. As an example, Jaka brings back the sword in issue #36. I had that planned almost from issue #12 when he lost it. as the big surprise in *Cerebus* #290, but I came up with something else, considered how that fit in with the sword and decided to return it earlier.

CS: Do you get many questions about Jaka, the human woman who loves Cerebus?

DAVE: Sure, 90 percent of fan questions concern when certain characters will return. Now, it's down to Red Sophia.

(Continued on page 64)

Two of the women in an earth pig's life. Right: The Regency Elf, a pixie who happily haunts his hotel suite (*Cerebus* #41). Below right: A three-panel sequence unveiling the aardvark's first impression of Jaka, the beautiful woman he loves (*Cerebus* #6).



Valerian
Not Just Another French Hero

By JEAN-MARC & RANDY LOFFICIER

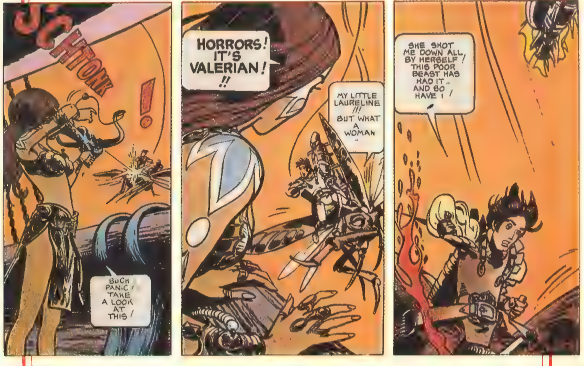
A young man and a girl are sitting in what appears to be a lovely garden. A waterfall whispers, birds sing, and flowers abound. The picnic is about to begin. Suddenly, an alarm rings and the whole scene shifts. The garden, the waterfall, and everything are revealed as the top part of a vehicle which, propelled by some kind of anti-grav system, now glides back towards a futuristic city.

The young man is Valerian, one of Earth's Spatiotemporal Agents. His companion is Laureline, a girl from the 12th Century and now one of comicdom's most intelligent, spirited heroines.

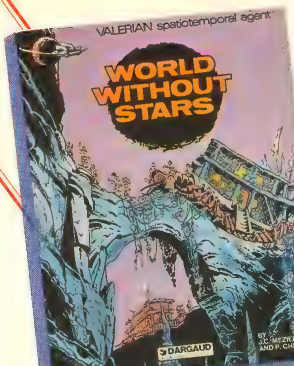
The scene is Galaxity, seat of the Earth Galactic Empire, somewhere in the 28th Century. Mankind has conquered space and time, encountered other intelligent species, but remained basically unchanged. To protect its interests, both in the cosmos and in its own past, Galaxity employs a corps of Spatiotemporal Agents. Their perilous mission—to carry out Earth's policies—is not always easy or even desirable.

Valerian began in November 1967 in the French weekly magazine *Pilote*. The first story was entitled "Valerian contre les Mauvais Reves" ["Valerian against the Nightmares"]. It was written by Pierre Christin, then using the pen-name "Linus," and drawn by Jean-Claude Mezieres, two childhood friends who only began collaborating during a year-long stay in the United States. Their first project together was a six-page humorous story that Mezieres sent to another friend, Jean "Moebius" Giraud. Giraud brought it to *Pilote*, which published it.

After their return to France, Mezieres and Christin did a few more stories, and decided to tackle a series. "Science fiction naturally came to mind because no such


SCHTONK !
SUCH RAGE ! TAKE A LOOK AT THIS !
HORRORS ! IT'S VALERIAN !
!!
MY LITTLE LAURELINE !!! BUT WHAT A WOMAN
SHE SHOT ME DOWN ALL BY HERSELF ! THIS POOR BEAST HAS HAD IT .. AND SO HAVE I !

This sequence, from "World Without Stars," shows life is never easy for Valerian or Laireline.



This is the second english-language volume featuring Valerian. Dargaud International hopes to publish all of his adventures for english-speaking fans.

series existed. We especially liked the genre, which gave us endless possibilities," Mezieres told Jacques Glenat in 1972. Strangely enough, "The Nightmares," a 30-odd page story, appears closer to heroic fantasy than SF. In it, Valerian pursues a mad scientist from the future, Xiombull, who has voyaged to the Dark Ages, where Valerian meets Laureline. According to Mezieres, she "was more intelligent and more refined than Valerian. We wanted to keep her, so, at the last minute, we changed the script so that he could take her with him to Galaxity!" In "Nightmares," Mezieres' style was still very much caricatural (Valerian's face was patterned after a then-well known pop singer), showing influences from Herge (Tintin) and Franquin (Spirou).

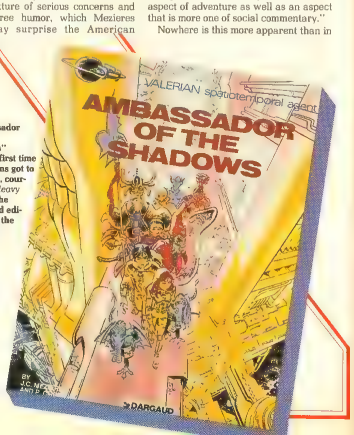
It is only with the next story, "La Cite des Eaux Mouvantes" ("The City of the Moving Waters"), that Mezieres and Christin achieve a more realistic and serious design. Artwise and in spirit, this is the first, true *Valerian* story as Valerian and Laureline chase Xiombull into the last days of the 20th Century, a time of devastation after mankind has finally committed nuclear holocaust. Xiombull knows that from the ashes, survivors and scientists will eventually create a better world, Galaxity. Using that information, he schemes to control and change history. Valerian's adventure in a Venice-like New York (Manhattan is partly submerged) have a haunting, grimly realistic look. Humor, however, is not completely absent; two of the story's major characters are caricatures of Jerry Lewis and Sun Ra.

This mixture of serious concerns and second-degree humor, which Mezieres says, "may surprise the American reader," is a trademark of *Valerian*. Its source is the close collaboration between two creators who share the same outlook and concerns. In his talk with Jacques Glenat, Mezieres described the nature of that partnership:

"We discuss the story, then Pierre writes a six-page synopsis. I break the story down into 46 pages, using two-page sequences so that I have room to develop what I consider to be the most graphic moments. Pierre then actually writes the text to fit the story's continuity. Of course, sometimes I will have to modify some sequences, or to add some dialogue to assist the action. . . Christin reads what I have done, and we work out any differences. It is truly a collaborative effort."

From "The City," 10 other tales plus a few short stories, have followed over a 12-year period. The elements in later adventures were already basically present in "The City" Valerian's anti-heroic nature, Laureline's humanity, and omnipresent social commentary. Not unlike Will Eisner's *The Spirit*, Valerian does not always resolve the story. "His role is rather that of a witness," Mezieres explained in a recent interview with French comics expert Guy Delcourt. "We do not believe in the concept of Hero, which is a kind of fascist idea, often present in American comic books, where one character always saves the entire world. There are also no purely 'good guys' or 'bad guys' in *Valerian*, just like in the real world. . . I think that our stories can always be read on many levels, with an aspect of adventure as well as an aspect that is more one of social commentary."

Nowhere is this more apparent than in



"Ambassador of the Shadows" was the first time Americans got to Valerian, courtesy of *Heavy Metal*. The Dargaud edition was the first one released in the States.

"Bienvenue sur Alflolol" ("Welcome to Alflolol"), the fifth *Valerian* story, which, Pierre Christin says, is derived from the plight of the American Indian. In "Alflolol," Earth has occupied Technorog, a planet rich in natural resources, and has turned it into a mining site. Unfortunately for the planet's bureaucratic Governor, Technorog's original inhabitants—who call their planet Alflolol— return, after centuries of wandering through space. The Alflololans are gentle giants and completely uninterested in technology. Their presence soon creates chaos on Technorog, so the Earthmen attempt to isolate these returned natives in out-of-the-way reserves. In the end, in Christin's own words, "Unlike the Indians, The Alflololans will not be subjugated. They leave the Earth people to their worthless rat race and return to space, where they can live a life of adventure and fun. They have lost their planet, but since they do not attach much importance to material possessions, which the Earthmen do, it is of little consequence."

In this story, Valerian is divided between his loyalties to Galaxity and his basically generous nature. He tries various compromises to serve the interests of both groups, but none succeed. It is Laureline, with her honest nature, who wholeheartedly supports the Alflololans' cause, and even joins them in the Technorog factories.

What is remarkable about *Valerian* is that it has maintained a consistently high level of quality throughout the year. There is perhaps no other science-fiction series which has, visually and thematically, been so imaginative. Since popularized by the *Star Wars* saga, alien cantinas were already part of *Valerian*'s universe as early as 1971. Fragments of Earth History duplicated in space by a galactic historian (with thousands of Valerian clones refighting World War I); elemental monsters from the far future invading present-day Earth; cosmic parasites; fake gods; space zoos; cloud cities; and Millenium Falcon-like spaceships, have all soared, zoomed, and rumbled long ago in *Valerian*.

Jean-Claude Mezieres's art can go from the comical to the cosmic. This space sequence shows a quiet moment aboard the ship just before the action breaks out.

"Ambassador of the Shadows" ("L'Ambassadeur des Ombres"), which appeared in *Heavy Metal* in 1981, is the first *Valerian* book published under the Dargaud International imprint in the United States. Translated by Mezieres' American wife, the volume has received rave reviews from Will Eisner, Gil Kane and Jim Steranko. It will be followed by "Le Feye Sans Etoile" ("World Without Stars"), a tale of a hollow planet in which two barbaric empires engage in a war of the sexes.

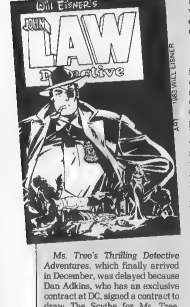
Although *Valerian* is far from the American muscle-bound-superhero-who-dresses-in-a-colorful-costume tradition, and may therefore disconcert some U.S. readers, it is, in fact, closer to space opera's faraway origins. Neither Han Solo nor Luke Skywalker look as if they belong to *The X-Men* or *Teen Titans*, but they would fit comfortably in Valerian and Laureline's spaceship.

Science-fiction fans in more than 10 countries have already delighted in Mezieres and Christin's excursions into space and time. Perhaps, American readers will at last be able to join them in graphic adventure. ■

The cute-looking fella is a Grumpy Converter from Bluxte, who can turn food into jewels although it leaves him pretty weak. He practically steals the show in "Ambassadeder of the Shadows."

Reporter

(Continued from page 16)



Ms. Tree's Thrilling Detective Adventures, which finally arrived in December, was delayed because Dan Adkins, who has an exclusive contract at DC, signed a contract to draw The Scythe for Ms. Tree. When the conflict was discovered, Adkins had to depart from the book. To fill the extra space, Terry Beatty drew the third chapter of the new Ms. Tree story. Issue two, out in March, will have the two Ms. Tree chapters, Frank Miller's centerfold poster of Philip Marlowe and the first chapter of The Scythe, still written by Dean Mullaney but drawn by a new artist, not-as-yet-chosen at press time.

KITCHEN SINK PRESS

Steve *Canyon Magazine* debuts in January and will feature the chronological printing of the comic strip by Milton Caniff. Shel Dorf, Caniff's letterer and San Diego Comic-Con chairman, will edit this project, starting off on a quarterly basis. The book will be rounded out with all sorts of "scrapbook" material and the magazine format will resemble the highly successful *Spirit* magazine. The book will retail for $2.95.

Guy Comix #3, edited by our own Howard Cruse, should be out currently and is 48 pages for $1.95. Stories are by Cruse, Lee Marrs, Bill Fugate and Roberta Gregory.

FANTACO ENTERPRISES

After a long delay in publishing, caused by a less-than-enthusiastic response to *Gates of Eden* #1, Fantaco is back in business with a full slate of books set for 1983.

Gates #2 will be out in February boasting work by Frank Miller, George Perez, Neal Adams, Trina Robbins, Jeff Jones, Fred Hembeck and many others. The 48-page book will sell for $2.95.

Died M for Hembeck will contain half-new and half-reprint material and will be out around spring. The 32-page, $1.95 item will be full of comics commentary. Hembeck maniacs should note that he has returned to contributing to the *Buyer's Guide for Comic Fandom* after an all-too-long delay.

MATTHU BRAAL

This Michigan-based company will be releasing *Voyages* #1 just about now. The anthology magazine contains 48 pages for $2.95, similar to *Gates of Eden* or *Eclipse*. Contents for the first issue include a 21-page story by Alex Toth featuring the return of Bravo for Adventure. Other contributors include Trina Robbins, Lela Dowling, Rick Geary and a Gallery of P. Craig Russell's art. Frank Brunner did the cover and the book will contain a full-color insert poster by Howard Chaykin.

FFANTASY FFACTORY

Just to let you know, the first issue of *D'Arc Tangent* premiered in December, a mere five months late. Work is already proceeding on issue two and both Freff and Phil Foglio promise to adhere to the schedule now that the birth pangs are over.

PACIFIC COMICS

Starslayer comes to an end with issue six at Pacific and then the book shifts over to First Comics. Replacing it on the Pacific schedule will be two more titles packaged by Bruce Jones although titles and formats have not been determined.

Arrangements have been completed with the Joe Kubert School of Cartoon Art to have students provide stories for the back-up slot in many Pacific titles. This represents a firm commitment on Pacific's part to cultivate new talent and provide a place for people to learn the craft. These stories will start appearing in early 1983.

FANTAGRAPHICS

Gary Groth promises the imminent release of Dolgodo, his first comic book. The 32-page, bimonthly Baxter book will sell for $1.50 and features a brand new SF strip by Ian Strnad and Dennis Fujitake. The premise involves Dalgoda, a dog-like alien who crashes on Earth and discovers that an alien race plans on invading the planet. This genuine collaboration represents the first regular comics work for either Strnad or Fujitake. The back-up strip will be entitled "Grimwood's Daughter," and is a fantasy also written by Strnad and illustrated by newcomer Kevin Nowlan. The back-up is slated to run for the first five issues.

COMIC STRIPS

Enter Conrad, a new Frog

When Bill Schorr was a young boy growing up in Albuquerque, New Mexico, he liked to play with frogs, catching them so he could study their every move. Today, the 34-year-old cartoonist still likes to play with frogs, especially a big-eyed, wise-cracking toad that chomps on cigars and hops around with a crown on his head.

Schorr is the creator of *Conrad*, a new, widely distributed newspaper strip that explores the seamier side of the famous fairy tale about the frog and the princess. In this twist on that tale, Conrad is a self-serving con man, George Burns-style, who fools an overweight, naive princess into believing that he is a prince in frog's clothing. The princess, still unnamed when the strip made its debut on November 8, prances about happily in her folly while Conrad schemes his way to all the comforts of the good life in the royal castle.

An editorial cartoonist for the *Los Angeles Herald-Examiner* since 1976, Schorr says he dreamed up the idea for Conrad four years ago when *National Lampoon* magazine asked him to do a series of six to eight humorous cartoons. Those cartoons, which featured the frog and an earlier, less homely version of the princess, naturally came to mind in 1981 when Schorr started thinking of drawing his own syndicated strip.

"I didn't want a political or a heavy type of strip," says Schorr, who has been drawing cartoons for as long as he can remember. "I wanted something that was pure fantasy, pure fun, pure mind relaxation for me."

That's not what his editors at the Tribune Company Syndicate wanted, however. They favored a "relevant" strip, on the order of a Doonesbury or a *Sally Forth*. What they received instead was a storybook comedy about a mythical kingdom populated by a smart-aleck frog, a love-sick princess, a protective, suspicious king, a bumbling witch named Agatha Sadspell and Fido, a frog-eating alligator that thinks it's a dog and is considered the royal pet

"You can't sit down, look at what's popular in *Newsweek* and then draw what's relevant," Schorr says. If he did, he adds, he might end up with a strip entitled "Herbie the Herpes."

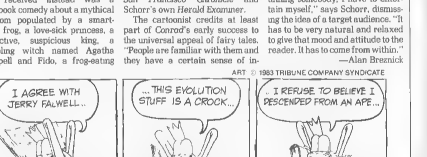
Fortunately, the syndicate agreed with him once they saw his first cartoons. So did the 125 or so newspapers that have agreed to run *Conrad* so far, including the *New York Daily News*, the *Chicago Tribune*, the *Washington Post*, the *San Francisco Chronicle* and Schorr's own *Herald Examiner*.

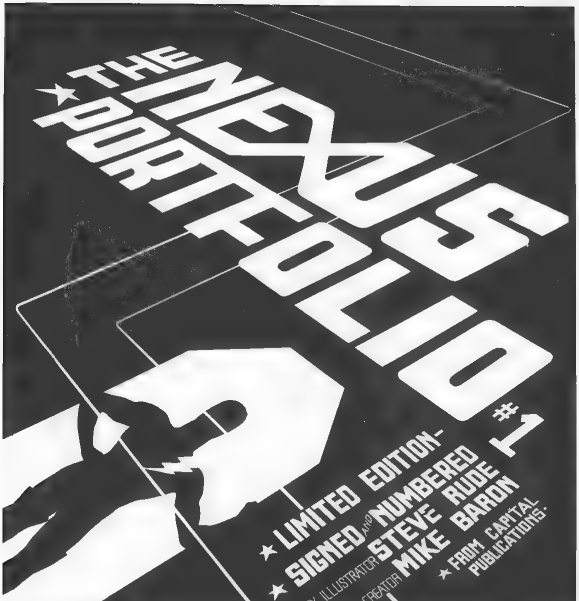
The cartoonist credits at least part of *Conrad*'s early success to the universal appeal of fairy tales. "People are familiar with them and they have a certain sense of innocence about them," he says. "People are comfortable with them."

A classic fairy tale format also allows him great flexibility in creating new situations and characters, Schorr notes. Unlike the characters in a "relevant" strip, he says, Conrad and company are "not locked in a period of time." And, he adds, "I can use other fairy tale characters as vehicles for situations."

Most of all, Conrad is fun to draw. "If I'm interested in entertaining somebody, I have to entertain myself," says Schorr, dismissing the idea of a target audience. "It has to be very natural and relaxed to give that mood and attitude to the reader. It has to come from within."

—Alan Breznick


ART © 1983 TRIBUNE COMPANY SYNDICATE
I AGREE WITH JERRY FALWELL...
...THIS EVOLUTION STUFF IS A CROCK...
I REFUSE TO BELIEVE I DESCENDED FROM AN APE...



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Guest Spot

Writer + Artist + Editor = Comic Book

By MARV WOLFMAN

Best known today for his revival of the Teen Titans, *Marv Wolfman has been contributing to comics of all kinds since 1968. After discovering comics through the* Superman *television series, Wolfman set about to write and edit comics as a career. After discovering that being an art teacher wasn't for him, Wolfman took an editorial post at DC and began a steady career in the industry. Since then, he has written and edited for DC, Marvel and Warren Publishing. At Marvel, he wrote the majority of their top titles and set records for his long run on* Tomb of Dracula *with artists Gene Colan and Tom Palmer. Wolfman is just coming off staff at DC to return to full-time writing. He currently scripts* Superman, *his all-time favorite superhero, in* Action Comics, Night Force, *again with Colan,* The New Teen Titans *and will soon add* The Vigilante *and* History of the DC Universe.

PHOTOS JOHN CLAYTON

(2) George Perez, who then pencils the pages, adding his own influences before

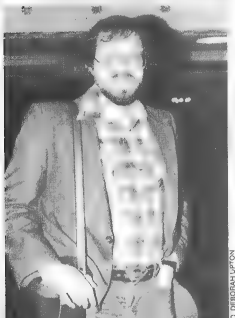


PHOTO FROM FILE COPY

(1) Marv Wolfman takes an approved plot and fleshes it out for . . .

Like movies and television, comic books are a collaborative medium. In almost all situations you have a number of creators working together, compromising, altering, re-writing and re-drawing. Comics are rarely a single person's vision.

With few exceptions you have an editor, a writer, a penciller, letterer, inker and colorist — in that order — producing any one comic. At times one person assumes more than one of these roles, but for the most part these are different people.

Each of these persons has his own vision of what the comic should be. Each knows how the characters should react, how the plots should be paced, how the art should look and how the dialogue should read.

Ignoring lettering and coloring for the moment, we are left with an editor, writer, penciller and inker. When these people work well together, you have a comic which will show their care and enthusiasm. Each person adds something to the final product. Each person has made some contribution to the comic's success.

And when you are working with three or four people, no one person can claim that the success of their comic is solely based on their part. The success is a synergy of talents — where the whole is greater than its parts.

It should begin with an editor who assembles the talent. Some editors have been creative people themselves — Stan Lee, Roy Thomas, Len Wein, Archie Goodwin, Dick Giordano, etc. who have been major writers and artists before becoming editors. Others are solely editors — Julius Schwartz, for example, who has not written comics but can rework a script better than most anyone else.

A good comic book editor is almost like a kindergarten teacher who has to coddle the talent, guide them, put them into proper groups where they will work the best, and sometimes, most importantly, keep the creative talent from fighting with each other.

The writer and artists function as a team. Some writers work without ever knowing or meeting their artists. Others work together, plotting out the stories as a team, the direction of the comic, working out every major detail of the story, every nuance of characterization.

And these days, where the majority of the creative talent are fans as well as professionals, you find a deeper, greater involvement with our material than was probably ever found before.

Because we are so deeply involved with what we do, we often become tunnel-visioned in our goals.

(3) Romeo Tanghal gets to ink the pages, adding the blacks and details and then . . .

We begin arguing with our collaborators. We start feuds. We mouth off to the fan press. We begin maximizing our own importance and minimizing our fellow collaborators . We tell a sometimes agreeing fan audience at conventions that we are totally responsible for the success of a certain comic and the idiots who work with us, well, they just held us back from making the comic even better.

The fanzines eat up this stuff. It makes for good copy and sales. I'm not putting down their needs — they serve a definite function, but what happens is that we begin to glorify the vilification of our fellow professionals. People we not only worked with closely but people we have probably become good friends with as well. Then are people we've talked with, confided in, bled with, shared the success of a good selling comic with, appeared at conventions with.

But, we came to honestly believe that we —either the writer or artist— are the only functioning person on a team.

And that, simply put, is garbage.

I said comics are collaborative. Virtually every successful collaboration is synergistic. In most cases a writer may come up with an initial concept — Hero A fights Villain B. From that point on everything that is done is done as a partnership. If the writer talks out the plot with an artist, there is give and take on both sides. If the writer types out a complete plot, then it's usually up to the artist to take that plot and pace the story, juggle elements about, remove extraneous material, fix up points the writer may have missed

The writer then gets back the art and sees that the artist may have either helped the story or hurt it, and then it's the writer's turn — dialogue. Dialogue if properly handled does not refer to the pictures —it doesn't say words what the artist has drawn — it embellishes the art, plays off the characters, and, if the artist failed to convey a story point, the dialogue has to tell what is missing. Very often—as often as a writer missing a plot point—an artist will not give a writer room for copy on an important emotional scene or a scene in which information must be conveyed.

What it comes down to is that neither side is perfect and both sides help each other.

The inker then receives the lettered pages and sees that the artist may have been rushed and he corrects some anatomy, or fixes the perspective on the backgrounds, adds blacks, or whatever.

Again, what it comes down to, is that each person is working toward a common goal.

Throughout comics we have seen the success of a perfect partnership. Siegel and Shuster, Simon and Kirby, Lee and Kirby, Thomas and Smith, Claremont and Byrne, Wein and Wrightson, and, I hope, Wolfman and Colan and Wolfman and Perez.

In most cases the talent, the creative people, improved their talents while working with their partner. In all cases, it was these people working together that made their comic succeed. It wasn't the writer alone and it wasn't the artist alone.

. . .(5) E. Nelsen Bridwell who proofs the finished book before it is colored and sent to the printer. And that's how a comic is packaged—through teamwork.

. . .(4) Len Wein edits the entire package before handing it on to

In many cases, these same talents have not had the same degree of success working with other partners or even working alone.

When I was asked to write a piece for COMICS SCENE to be read by comic fans, I decided to try something different. This really isn't aimed at the fans. It's aimed at my fellow professionals.

I am getting very tired of reading the petty bickering and complaints and backbiting that we have about each other. Frankly, I don't think the fan market is the place we should vent our spleens. It doesn't serve the complainer well, and frankly it minimizes you as a person. You are not the only reason for a magazine's success. You may be vitally important, but you didn't do it alone. Chances are, without the person you were working with, the book would not have worked as well. You may not even have improved as readily if you hadn't worked with someone who challenged you and tried to expand your perimeters

I am asking you, the creative talent, to stop these public attacks on someone who was not only your collaborator but most likely your friend. Yes, problems between creators will arise, partnerships will end, friendships may wither and turn into something less than friendly, but let's keep this private, shall we?

Work not on diminishing your partner but on improving yourself. ■

Mr. Wolfman has been given a free hand to express his thoughts and ideas in any manner he wishes within the scope of the publication. This column does not necessarily reflect the editorial views of COMICS SCENE nor our philosophy

An Arachnid's Anniversary

Spidey Approaches Issue #250

By PATRICK DANIEL O'NEILL

What can you say about a 23-year old college grad student, who stars in four monthly comic books, co-stars on a Saturday morning TV show, is a successful news photographer, and has the proportionate speed and strength of a spider? Ask Tom DeFalco.

"It's a lot of fun to be Spider-Man." That's what DeFalco, editor of *Amazing Spider-Man*, *Spectacular Spider-Man*, and *Marvel Team-Up*, says is the theme of those books. [The other book is *Marvel Tales*, currently reprinting the classic Stan Lee/Steve Ditko stories.] Since he became the sole Spider-Man editor over a year ago, DeFalco has been trying to restore that element of fun to the web-swinger, and tighten the continuity among the three titles.

And now, DeFalco and *Amazing Spider-Man* scripter Roger Stern have begun a new phase in the life of Marvel's premiere character. Beginning in issue #238 and continuing for 12 issues, culminating in #250, later this year, Stern will have a sort of magnum opus, a storyline that introduces a new major villain, and will guest-star some old friends from Spidey's cast of characters.

Roger Stern explains the year-long plotline, and how it came about: "I sat down and made up a list of the things I'd like to do in the next year or so. Just a couple of sentences for each story . . . basically the subplots even more than who he's going to fight or what villains will be entering his life. The major villain thread in it is this new character, the Hobgoblin, who sort of spins off from the old Green Goblin."

As Stern tells it, the Hobgoblin is an unknown person who has found one of the original Green Goblin's (Norman Osborn) many hideouts around town. "He's modified the Green Goblin's old equipment to his own purposes. He has access to all the Goblin's old stuff, plus some new equipment we've never seen before (because Osborn never got around to using it before he died)." So who is the Hobgoblin? "Spider-Man doesn't know," says Stern. "Beyond that, the readers don't know who he is, either. Just like the old Green Goblin, all we ever see of him is a guy with his face in shadows, or reading a newspaper, things like that. So far, I'm the only one who knows who he is—even Tom doesn't know. I haven't even decided if I'll reveal who he is in #250. After all, Stan Lee went for three or four years before he revealed the Goblin's real identity."

But why take the time to plot out such a lengthy and painstaking story? "Ever since I've been doing Spider-Man, I've spent most of my time trying to re-establish the character that Stan Lee, Steve Ditko and John Romita did all those years ago," explains Stern. "I felt that a lot of what made Spider-Man special—the thing that kept people coming back and remembering Spider-Man so much — had been sort of lost, been diluted over the years. It's sort of

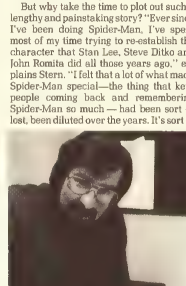


PHOTO M/C CAPTION, COURTESY AMAZING HEROES

Tom DeFalco, editor of all three Spider-Man titles, and proud of the fact that the stories are now cohesive.

inevitable when a character's been through so many writers, I guess. Until recently, there wasn't any real editorial thought given to the Spider-Man books as a whole. So I was sitting around thinking, we've re-established Spider-Man, now it's time to start doing something new, expanding on that, really getting some more growth into the strip again."

THREE BOOKS—ONE CONTINUITY?

How will this major plotline affect the tightened continuity among the three Spider-Man titles? Tom DeFalco says it won't. DeFalco says the idea is *not* to have three titles with one plotline, as DC Comics has done with *Batman* and *Detective Comics*. "I find the *Batman/Detective* thing very boring. As an editor, I would go nuts if I had one title that was coming out three times a month. What I like is three distinct titles with three different directions, but a consistent character."

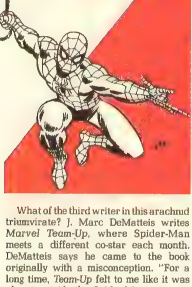
DeFalco says he achieves that goal [or tries] by talking with his writers as often as possible, and by making sure that each writer sees the others' plots, and copies of the finished pages as well. Stern says the continuity is "not perfect yet . . . we're still trying to work some of the bugs out. If I see anything, I can give Tom a call and say 'Hey, what about this reflecting on this issue?', and Tom goes 'Right,' or 'Don't worry; I've taken care of it,' and things get worked out. The fan mail response has been good—'Hey, you're not ignoring what's going on in the other books!'—Well, no, you can't really . . . unless there are two guys with the same name and power going around town."

Stern's counterpart on *Spectacular Spider-Man*, Bill Mantlo, agrees, telling a story from his early days scripting the title. "One of the first things Tom DeFalco said to me when he asked me to write *Spectacular* was that ideally the two books should be written by one person. I tend to agree." But Mantlo says the "friendly, positive" competition between himself and Stern has led to better stories in both books. "I'll pick up one of Roger's books and go 'This is good. I wish I'd done it,' so I have to do something better. And I hope he's doing the same thing when he gets my plots." Mantlo says seeing another writer's plots in the initial stages is a risky proposition." There's a tendency to say 'This is real good—I'll use it.' So Roger and I have to be real careful not to use each other's ideas, but to come up with ideas of our own." Mantlo compliments Stern on the creation of the Hobgoblin. "I wish to hell I'd come up with it. It's about time we had a new Green Goblin back and it was the obvious way to do it. I didn't see it; Roger did."

Mantlo has run across another problem in maintaining a tight continuity: a difference in the speed with which writers plot stories. "I plot much faster than every-

"I consider my main job to bring back the excitement of the friendly neighborhood web-swinger." —Tom DeFalco, editor

one in existence," he says, laughingly. "The problem with that is I'm far ahead of Roger and most everyone else in plotting. So Roger is stuck with reacting to me. The ideal situation would be that we both sit down once a month and do our plots, with them merging at some point. It's real difficult when you're facing deadline pressures and all."



ALL ART © 1990 MARVEL COMICS GROUP

What of the third writer in this arachnid triumvirate? J. Marc DeMatteis writes *Marvel Team-Up*, where Spider-Man meets a different co-star each month. DeMatteis says he came to the book originally with a misconception. "For a long time, *Team-Up* felt to me like it was almost outside the Spider-Man universe, and when I first started writing the book, I was uncomfortable with that. It was almost like I was afraid to use the regular continuity. I was afraid to use the regular characters, for fear that I was stepping on someone's toes. As a result, I think my early *Team-Up* stories certainly didn't please me." He says the situation changed after a talk with DeFalco, who explained that all three Spider-Man books should work together, and that *Marvel Team-Up* should not take a subordinate position. "As soon as I began to approach it that way," says DeMatteis, "and do the kind of stories I really wanted to do, I became very happy with the book. What's important is that, now, significant changes in Peter's life can occur within the pages of *Team-Up*."

SIGNIFICANT TEAM-UPS

DeMatteis runs into bigger continuity problems than either Stern or Mantlo, because he must also fit his guest stars in, without seriously violating the continuity of their books. "I tend to use a lot of characters that I am writing, to avoid that problem," the writer of *Captain America*, *Ghost Rider* and *The Defenders* explains. "The thing I'd like to see with *Team-Up* is that significant things can happen with any character, not just Spider-Man. The recent story with the Beast and his relationship with his parents [*M T-U* #124] is a case-in-point. It's a pretty important story in the life of the Beast... and usually in *Team-Up*, it was never an important story in the life of anybody. As a reader, that used to turn me off. 'Oh, yeah. *Team-Up*—that's over there in the corner.' You never quite took the book seriously because it seemed like you just came up with some ridiculous reason to throw two heroes together... they'd have fun... they'd beat somebody up... and they'd go their separate ways." Giving space to the guest star and his life means taking space away from Peter, according to DeMatteis. "Every month you're not only concerned with Peter, you're concerned with bringing in your guest star. In the other books, you've got, oh, six pages for Peter's life. In *Team-Up*, that space has to be shared."

With a sort of "three-in-one" continuity, each book tends to take on its own identity. When *Spectacular Spider-Man* was originally introduced some six years ago, it was intended to concentrate on Peter Parker's private life. Hence the book's full title, Peter Parker, the Spectacular Spider Man. Somehow that never jelled. DeFalco says it won't now, either. "As far as I'm concerned, the titles are interchangeable. We have two distinct books, each moving in its own direction—but I could switch the mastheads and *Spectacular* could continue in its direction, but we'd call it *Amazing*... and *Amazing* could continue in its direction, but we'd call it *Spectacular*. I'm not directing either book toward one aspect of the character's life." However, DeFalco has noticed that his writers seem to have favorite supporting casts. For example, in writing *Amazing Spider-Man*, Stern seems to prefer dealing with the *Daily Bugle* and its employees. On the other hand, DeMatteis, in *Marvel Team-Up*, tends to stick with Aunt May and the people in her retirement home.

Spectacular Spider-Man has also recently taken on the appearance of an "experimental" book, particularly through a series of unusual covers. DeFalco credits

A sampling of the innovative and different covers found on Spectacular Spider-Man these days.

THE NIGHT GWEN STACY DIED
--AND YOU CAN BE SURE THE STORY DOESN'T STINK!
AND A LEAN, SILENT FIGURE SLOWLY ARISES FROM THE SHADOWS OF GREEN ACRES CEMETERY, SR. ANGER OF LAST TIME IN THIS WORLD WITH GREAT POWER THERE MUST ALSO COME--GREAT RESPONSIBILITY!
--YOU KILLED THE WOMAN I LOVE!
"IS BORN WHOSE NAME IS DOOM!"
AND NOW FOR THAT, YOU'RE GOING TO DIE!
"DUEL TO THE DEATH WITH The VULTURE!"
STILL WANNA SUE ME??
ACTION SHOTS OF ELECTRO FIGHTING SPIDER-MAN!! THEY'RE THE REAL THING! THEY'RE WORTH A FORTUNE!!
THOP!
SPIDER-MAN!
The AMAZING SPIDER-MAN
SPIDER-MAN!
YOU--YOU KNOW WHO I AM? YOU MUST HAVE ALWAYS KNOWN
BUT--YOU NEVER TOLD! OH I NEVER GAVE ME AWAY!
IT'S HIM!
ON A SPIDER'S WEB!
BUT, PETER PARKER IS THE VERY LAST THING ON SPIDER'S MIND!--
I--NEVER FELT THIS WAY--BE FORE!
IT'S LIKE--I'M DROWNING--FALLING--AND EVERYTHING SEEMS REAL--NOTHING HANGS TOGETHER--

SPIDER-MAN
PETER! HE-- HE CALLED ME PETER--
BE GOOD TO HER-- SON! BE GOOD-- TO HER--
MY UNCLE... MY ENEMY?
NOTHING CAN STOP THE SANDMAN!
BY STAN LEE AND STEVE DITKO
AND, A SHORT DISTANCE AWAY...
SPIDER-MAN ® & © 1965 MARVEL COMICS GROUP
COLLAGE © 1985 HOWARD ZIMMERMAN

that to *Spectacular*'s past reputation as a second-string title. "It seems to have a problem holding artists. I think there's an old prejudice that *Amazing* is the 'A' title and *Spectacular* is the 'B' title. I've tried to destroy that image as much as I could." He says the constantly changing artists resulting from that misconception made experimentation easier on that book, adding that it made him "a lot more receptive to oddball ideas." DeFalco also credits cover designer Ed Hannigan with the unusual covers. "I think he's one of the finest designers in the business today. Sometimes he wouldn't be oddball enough . . . and then I'd tell him to be a little wilder."

THE RETURN OF FUN

But what about that over-all theme—"It's a lot of fun to be Spider-Man"? DeFalco says restoring a sense of fun to the Spider-Man books has been his goal since he took over the editing post. "When I was a kid, I would look at Spidey swinging and bouncing from building to building . . . and he looked like he was having a great time. As I got older and the writers changed, it seemed to lose a lot of that pure joy and wonderment. I consider my main job to bring back that stuff, to bring back the ex-

Two Generations of Spider Artists

A page from this past summer's Spider-Man annual. (above) pencilled by John Romita Jr., and inked by John Romita, Sr. (below).

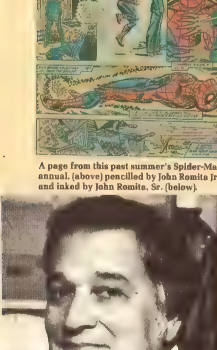


PHOTO: JOHN CLAYTON

John Romita is the artist most identified with Spider-Man, with the possible exception of Steve Ditko. Beginning in the late '60s, Romita's style set the tone for every Spider-Man artist to follow, including other big names like John Buscema, Ross Andru, and Gil Kane. Now his son, John, Jr., has taken the artistic helm of *Amazing Spider-Man*. In a conversation with both men, we asked Romita, Sr. if he saw any similarities between his work and his son's.

"I think the story-telling approach is very, very similar. I think he uses my general approach because we used to discuss stories. But I think there's a lot of John Buscema in his stuff. I know he's always admired John, and I join in that. I used to tell him all the time that I thought Buscema was the best artist in the business. . . . and he sort of gravitated toward John's style. I think there's a certain similarity in the swinging, crawling Spider-Man shots, since they're limited by a certain amount of movements. Otherwise, I think he's got a much more ambitious approach. I was looking for simplicity and he seems to put a lot of elements in his stuff. He's able to organize elements very well. I envy him that—I think he surpassed me that way a long time ago."

Romita, Sr. also thinks his son was affected by the younger group of artists who entered the field in the late '60s and early '70s. "It made him develop differently—with an extra dimension in his work. Artists in my generation were always trying to simplify and clarify. The new group from the '70s tries to embellish, I think, which is a case of how much time you devote to it. I was always trying to expedite it and get the thing done quickly, because I was always fighting the clock. These young people are intent on doing the most elaborate and interesting things they can. I admire that."

Romita, Jr. also sees a resemblance to his father's work—but in his head, not necessarily on paper. "Everything I envision when I start looks like my father's stuff or John Buscema's—and when it comes out it looks like John Romita, Jr. That's unfortunate," he laughs. "but the best laid plans . . . ."

Romita, Jr. says he has always wanted to be a comic-book artist, since his father took over the pencilling chores on *Daredevil* back in 1965. "That was my first exposure to adventure comics. I was really enamored by them—I was fascinated. The first time I saw them, I wanted to be a comic-book artist." But his father, aware of the hard work and comparatively low pay in the comics field, tried to discourage John, Jr. from following in his footsteps. "I went to college and majored in advertising," Romita, Jr. explains, "and I couldn't find any work in advertising. I gave up all hope and said 'I think I'll try to do some work for Marvel.' I came up here nosing around and got a couple of side jobs through Marie Severin."

The younger Romita remembers his first Spider-Man assignment with horror: "It was a little five-page back-up feature in a *Spider-Man Annual*. It was terrible; it was really bad . . . and I knew it as I was doing it. I had no idea why they would print it. Al Milgrom inked it and because of his inking, it became acceptable." Why did this assignment scare him so much—because of his father's work on the same title? "I don't think I thought so much of who had preceded me as the thought of doing that character. It was a big title, the biggest as a matter of fact. I hadn't thought, 'Gee, my father has done it—and now I have to do it,' so much as 'Oh, God—I'm doing something that's going to be printed.'"

The two Romitas have worked on few projects together—the 1982 *Spider-Man Annual*, and *Amazing Spider-Man* #236. Both times, the younger artist has penciled and the elder has inked. Romita, Sr. says he has to resist making changes when inking his son's pencils. "I think when a mood has been set by a penciller, one of the worst things a guy like me can do is to overpower it. I've been known to do that—as guys like Gil Kane will attest. I've been known to change things to such an extent that it winds up looking more like my stuff than the men who conceived it. I tried to fight it on the work I did with John. He's got a good sense of design . . . all I had to do was make slight adjustments to please myself.

"I wish I had the time to do more with him. If I were willing to give up my nine-to-five job, I think I could do steady work with him. But I'm trying to avoid getting back into the rat-race, turning out a lot of pages every week. I just don't have the energy for that anymore."

The younger Romita admits to some trepidations about working in tandem with his father. "I was worried about what he would say. I was worried he would say 'Well, I think I'm going to change this.' But he ended up not saying anything. He just worked on it and did his thing. He made changes and improved what had to be improved . . . which is just his way. He didn't say, 'Oh, this is bad,' or he was going to change this or that. We have that mutual respect for each other."

Marvel Comics has long been a family affair: brothers Stan Lee and Larry Lieber; brother and sister John and Marie Severin; husband and wife Walt Simonson and Louise Jones. Now a new family has joined their creative ranks: father and son John and John Romita.

—Patrick Daniel O'Neill

"So I was sitting around thinking, we've reestablished Spider-Man, now it's time to start doing something new, expanding on that, really getting some more growth into the strip again." —Roger Stern, writer, Amazing Spider-Man

citement of the friendly neighborhood web-swinger." Given that main theme, DeFalco agrees there is a counter-point: "It's not as much fun to be Peter Parker."

"Parker has a rough life. Given my choice, I would prefer to be Spider-Man. I think most of us in our day-to-day living have the opportunity to be Peter Parker." In addition, DeFalco says Parker is reaching a stage in life where he will face some tough decisions. "He's been trying to live four or five lives at once. He's going to have to sit down and decide if continuing his education is worthwhile. Lance Bannon is challenging his career as a photographer, he's quit his teaching-assistant position. He can't be a grad student all his life."

Surprisingly, the writers both agree and disagree with editor DeFalco on that theme. Roger Stern has a lengthy, almost psycho-analytical description of Peter Parker: "Spider-Man has all the problems I had getting out of my teens and into my 20s. . . but magnified about ten-fold. He's the classic late-bloomer.

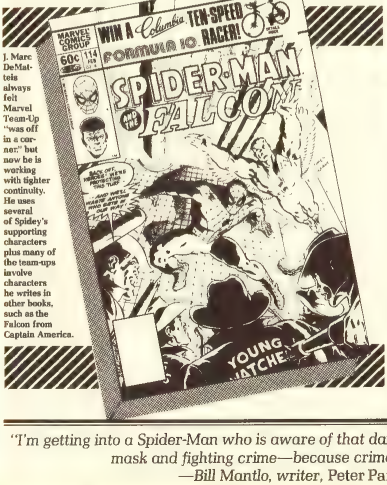
"He was the nerd in high school—the guy who carried around a slide rule or these days a calculator—with the thick glasses and the plastic pocket protector, the briefcase, all that stuff. He's the type of guy a lot of people are as they get out of high school. But as they get out into the world, they become more sure of themselves, slowly they develop.

"Now, Parker had a wild card thrown into his life. Around his sophomore year, he was bitten by a radioactive spider and got all these funny powers. That meant he was able to sublimate all the outrageous things he wanted to do but was afraid to do

into Spider-Man. He got cocky. And right in the middle of it all, his uncle, his father-figure, was killed because of Parker's inaction. Now, on top of all this wonderful release of passion, you get a heavy guilt trip laid on. His whole life became a see-saw between wanting to go out and engage in this incredible hedonistic experience of being Spider-Man, and the guilt and responsibility of having to do what's right.

"He's trying to escape Peter Parker, the sophomore nerd. . . but his self-image is still that, even though he knows it isn't him anymore."

Marc DeMatteis finds some common ground with Stern. "It always seemed to me that the whole point (at least looking back 20 years when I was reading the stuff) was that being Spider-Man wasn't that much fun. The whole thing was about this regular schlump who became a superhero. And what you discovered was that if you're a regular schlump, when you put on a costume, you're still a regular schlump, but with superpowers. I think the important thing about Spider-Man to me is that Peter Parker is as great a character as Spider-Man. It's one of those characters that all through these years, all the ins and



J. Marc DeMatteis always felt Marvel Team-Up "was off in a corner," but now he is working with tighter continuity. He uses several of Spidey's supporting characters plus many of the team-ups involve characters he writes in other books, such as the Falcon from Captain America.

"I'm getting into a Spider-Man who is aware of that danger entailed in putting on a mask and fighting crime—because crime is not fun!" —Bill Mantlo, writer, Peter Parker

"The whole thing was about this regular schlump who became a superhero. When you put on a costume, you're still a regular schlump but with super powers."
—J. Marc DeMatteis, writer, Marvel Team-Up

outs, ups and downs . . . it's a character I've always believed in. So whether he's having a good time or not doesn't matter to me, as long as he's a good, strong, believable character."

But Bill Mantlo finds nothing funny about being Spider-Man, except on the surface. "On one level, yes, being Spider-Man is a lot of fun—wisecracking, joking, feeling the exuberance of swinging through the air on a slender webline. That experience, being something we mere mortals can never hope to do, has got to bring out a certain excitement in the reader.

"But what I'm trying to get at is a sense that, as soon as you put on the Spider-Man costume, you have to joke, because the situations you are going into are so deadly dangerous—because your life is on the line every single minute.

"Spider-Man was silly at one point in the mid-'70s. He was treated in a silly manner, he fought silly villains—the constantly resurgent Spider-slayers, the Shocker, the Jackal, the Rocket Racer, the Big Wheel. There were silly situations, like Aunt May marrying Doctor Octopus. That, I think, denigrated the character and cheapened him. Not to mention such things as the Spider-mobile, which were imposed on us by the character's phenomenal commercial success.

"I'm trying to get away from that silliness . . . and get back to a Spider-Man who's aware that he's going into deadly dangerous situations, and jokes to keep his sanity while in them. When you're dealing with villains like the Kingpin, Doctor Octopus (who I've returned to his original insanity), the Punisher (who has got to be a psychopath incarnate), and Boomerang—all people who are in this game of murder for keeps—Spider-Man has to joke to keep himself above their plane. At the same time, he's joking to cover up his own fear, his own hesitancy, his own awareness of his limitations against maniacs who will stop at nothing. I'm getting into a Spider-Man who is aware of that danger entailed in putting on a mask and fighting crime—because crime is not fun!"

That's a touchy subject with Mantlo, who sees some recent fan-favorite books taking a dangerous slant. "I think too many Marvel books over too many years have made crime seem to be fun, that there is no punishment at the end of the crime, and I think that's wrong. I think there has to be a good and bad. I think the bad has to be defeated and punished by the good, after a strong, moral battle.

"It's that kind of conflict I want to build into Spider-Man—that he's got to struggle and really strain and not just to defeat this kind of utter evil that's going on. The ultimate cost to Spider-Man is becoming as hardened as the very villains he fights. And the struggle is to not let that happen, to not become the hardened semi-psychopath that I think Daredevil becomes in Frank Miller's last issue.

"I don't want Spider-Man to become as crazy as the people he fights, simply because he dons the costume. I want him to be the winner in the end—that after he's descended into the mire, he comes up clean by his own efforts."

Mantlo and Stern also express concern over fighting the public image of Spider-Man. Mantlo says, "It was very hard to take the anti-hero Spider-Man of the '60s and maintain that kind of anti-heroness once he was on every lunchbox in America." Stern agrees it's a problem, but says he's found a solution: "I sort of like to play against it. It's an advantage in that people are aware of Spider-Man—so you've got their attention to begin with. The thing I keep in the back of my head when I'm writing the book is that I'm like a carnival barker: 'Hi there! Heard of Spider-Man? Come in here—I'll show you who he really is!'

"The only problem with merchandising in the United States is that merchandisers all have this sort of late '60s Batman idea of what superheroes are. They're real friendly guys and they wear nice costumes and they're good to kids and all that—real goody-two shoes. 'Yes, yes, I am Joe Superhero. How do you do, sir? May I help you across the street?' Spider-Man isn't like that—he'd as likely play a practical joke on you as take you across the street.

"I try to use the public identification to bring them in and then say, 'I want you to meet Spider-Man—he's really neat.' "

So what can we say about this young man with the incredibly confused life? What can be added to a hero who is "on every lunchbox in America?" Each of the four men who control his destiny see him slightly differently—fun guy to be, ex-nerd with a poor self-image, man with a dangerous job, regular schlump with superpowers. Maybe that complicated image is what has kept Spider-Man in the limelight for over 20 years . . . has kept his main title running for nearly 250 issues. Spider-Man is Everyman—in longjohns. ■

A Special Spider-Man Contest

What better way to introduce you skeptics to the wonders of Spider-Man than with some samples of his current adventures? Marvel Comics has donated 55 prizes for this contest and all it involves is a little detective work.

Somewhere in this issue, we have hidden away three spiders and two spider webs. If you can send us a postcard, telling us on what pages you found all five items, before March 1, 1983, you'll be eligible for a drawing.

After that date, we will select 10 first prize winners who will receive copies of Michael Golden's *Spider-Man's Greatest Adventures* graphic novel. The soft-cover, full-color volume won't even be on sale until March and it promises to be a beauty.

Afterwards, we will select 25 second prize winners who will get a free subscription to the Spider-Man title of their choice. This includes *Amazing Spider-Man, Spectacular Spider-Man, Marvel Team-Up* and *Marvel Tales.*

The final 25 correct answers chosen will get 4 issue Spider-samplers containing one current issue of the four Spidey titles. If you haven't tried the web-head's adventures lately, this is the prize for you!

Remember, we need a postcard with your name, address, zip code and the page numbers for the hidden spiders and webs. And we need them no later than March 1. Send your entries (and please limit yourself to one postcard) to:

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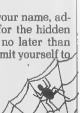

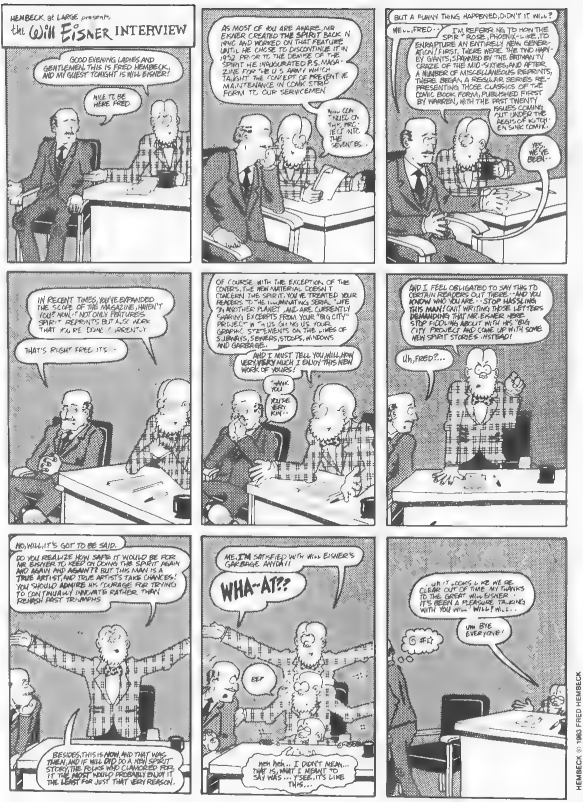
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GOOD EVENING, LADIES AND GENTLEMEN! THIS IS FRED HEMBECK, AND MY GUEST TONIGHT IS WILL EISNER!
NICE TO BE HERE, FRED.
AS MOST OF YOU ARE AWARE, MR. EISNER CREATED THE SPIRIT BACK IN 1940, AND WORKED ON THAT FEATURE UNTIL HE CHOSE TO DISCONTINUE IT IN 1952 PRIOR TO THE DEATH OF THE SPIRIT. HE INAUGURATED P.S. MAGAZINE FOR THE U.S. ARMY WHICH TAUGHT THE TECHNIQUE OF PREVENTIVE MAINTENANCE IN COMBAT EQUIPMENT TO OUR SERVICEMEN.
NOW, CAN YOU TELL US WHY YOU DECIDED TO RESURRECT THE SPIRIT?
BUT A FUNNY THING HAPPENED...DON'T IT, WILL?
WE...FRED?...
I'M REFERRING, NO, TO HOW THE SPIRIT BOOK, PUBLISHED—WE, TO EMPHASIZE AN ENTIRELY NEW DEPARTURE—I FIRST THERE WERE THE TWO HAPPY DAYS, STRANDED BY THE BROWN TO GRAZE OF THE MID-SIXTIES AND AFTER, A NUMBER OF MISCELLANEOUS REPRINTS, THERE BREAK, A REGULAR SERIES, REPRESENTING THOSE CLASSICS OF THE COMIC BOOK FORM, PUBLISHED FIRST BY HARPER'S, WITH THE FIRST TWENTY PAGES COMING OUT UNDER THE BRAND OF WITH EN-VOGUE COMIX...
YEP, WE'VE BEEN...
IN RECENT TIMES, YOU'VE EXPANDED THE SCOPE OF THE MAGAZINE. HAVEN'T YOU? NOW, NOT ONLY FEATURES "SPIRIT" REPRINTS, BUT ALSO WORK THAT YOU'RE DOING PRESENTLY.
THAT'S RIGHT, FRED. IT'S...
OF COURSE, WITH THE EXCEPTION OF THE COMICS, THE NEW MATERIAL DOESN'T CONTAIN THE SPIRIT. YOU'VE TREATED YOUR READERS TO AN ILLUMINATING SERIAL, "LIFE ON ANOTHER PLANET," AND ARE CURRENTLY RUNNING EXCERPTS FROM YOUR "BIG CITY" PROJECT. A "LOOK ON" US FROM YOUR GRAPHIC STEPCHILDREN ON THE WIRES OF SUBWAYS, SIDEWALK STOOPS, WINDOWS AND GARBAGE CANS.
AND I MUST TELL YOU, WILL, HOW VERY, VERY MUCH I ENJOY THIS NEW WORK OF YOURS!
AND I FEEL OBLIGATED TO SAY THIS TO OBTAIN REACTIONS OUT THERE, "AND YOU KNOW WHO YOU ARE." STOP HASSLING THIS MAN! STOP WRITING THOSE LETTERS DEMANDING THAT MR. EISNER WORK! STOP FOCUSING ABOUT WITH "BIG CITY" PROJECT AND COME UP WITH SOME NEW SPIRIT STORIES INSTEAD!
UH, FRED?...
NO, WILL, IT'S GOT TO BE SAID.
DO YOU REALIZE HOW SAPPY IT WOULD BE FOR MR. EISNER TO KEEP ON DOING THE SPIRIT AGAIN AND AGAIN? BUT THIS MAN IS A TRUE ARTIST! ONE OF YOUR ARTISTS HAS CHANGED! YOU SHOULD ADMIRE HIM FOR TRYING TO CONTINUALLY INNOVATE RATHER THAN FEEDING FAT CHUMPS!
BESIDES, THIS IS HOW AND THAT WAS THEN, AND IF WILL DID DO A NEW SPIRIT STORY, THE FOLKS WHO CLAMORED FOR IT THE MOST WOULD PROBABLY ENJOY IT THE LEAST FOR JUST THAT VERY REASON.
ME...I'M SATISFIED WITH WILL EISNER'S CARTOONS, ANYWAY!
WHA--AT??
EEK!
HEH, HEH...I DIDN'T MEAN... THAT IS, WHAT I MEANT TO SAY WAS... YEEE-ITS LIKE THIS...
...UH-IT LOOKS LIKE WE'RE CLEAR OUT OF TIME. SO I WANTS TO THE GREAT WILL EISNER. IT'S BEEN A PLEASURE TALKING WITH YOU, WILL! WILL-THILL...
UM, BYE EVERYONE!
G #%!
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You might think that's enough, but it's not all! The shattering (and Forrest J Ackerman's departure from *Famous Monsters of Filmland* is revealed in a frank and intimate interview with the Godfather of Sci-Fi fandom, the man who single-handedly created the monster magazine field, and to whom we all owe our jobs! Yes, the Ackermonster is still alive and kicking—in the pages of FANGORIA! and, while we're stealing people from other magazines, we've got STARLOG's own SPFXpert, David Hutchison, beginning a lengthy two-part story on the optical effects of *Poltergeist* and Lucasfilm's Academy Award winning Richard Edlund! PLUS: the FX of Steve Neill, the films of Richard (*Fiend Without a Face*) Gordon, the decapitation of Uncle Bob, Bloodfarming with Ed Kelleher and MORE!

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The Three-Ring Circus of Bil Keane

By WILLIAM R. LUND

"I've always been an innovator," observes Bil Keane. "I like to do stuff that's a little bit different, that makes it stand out as not just another one of the crowd."

Keane, an innovator for over 30 years, sits in his home studio in Paradise Valley, Arizona, searching for those moments in his career that have made *him* "stand out as not just another one of the crowd." The walls are decorated with *Family Circus* posters; the bulletin board frames a photograph of avid tennis players Clint Eastwood and Keane; bookshelves are stocked with biographical works on cartoonists, fine art books, fairy tales and the numerous collections of *Family Circus* memories.

The Philadelphia-born illustrator nurtured his cartooning skills for three years in the army during World War II, drawing for *Yank*, *The Daily Pacifican* and the *Pacific Stars and Stripes* in Tokyo, where he created *At Ease with the Japanese*. In 1948, while editor of the *Philadelphia Bulletin's Fun Book*—where he had conceived *Silly Philly* and *Mirth Quakers*, and added *Mandrake the Magician* and Will Eisner's weekly, *The Spirit* to bolster the Sunday section's readership—Keane returned to the South Pacific to marry his WW II Australian sweetheart, Thelma Crane.

By the 1950s, Keane found it to be "fairly insular to work just on a newspaper" and applied his pencil to some freelance work. He sold a few cartoon spreads to *This Week Magazine*'s editor Ralph Stein. "And then I submitted to the *Saturday Evening Post*, *Look*, *Collier's* . . ." Keane laughs, adding, "All the magazines that have folded are the ones I did cartoons for! And, eventually, the *Bulletin* folded, too!"

Keane spent "hours and hours everyday imitating cartoons out of the magazines" during his youth, especially the distinctive styles of *New Yorker* cartoonists Richard Taylor, Sam Cobean, Peter Arno, Robert Day and, in particular, George Price. "His stuff back then in 1936-37, looked just like his stuff does in 1982: he's so fine," he fondly remembers. "And George Lichty was an idol. He was so great with *Grin and Bear It*, and he used to do beautiful stuff in color for *Esquire* years ago.

"If you like the way an artist puts in his blacks or the background, you should do his style," Keane instructs. "Then you are getting all of what you think are the best attributes of each cartoonist, putting them into your own worksheet. What you find is you'll come up with your own individual style that is really not a combination of all of those—but you emerge out of it.

"I think imitation is a shame when you're a slave to a particular thing. If an editor says, 'I want a cartoonist who draws like Jeff MacNelly!'—and then you get a guy who just bends over backwards to draw like MacNelly when he actually would draw more Herblock or Paul Conrad, then you are fighting an uphill battle and you'll never develop. It eats away at you if you're not doing what comes naturally."

Keane was searching for an idea he could easily adapt as a syndicated cartoon, when he discovered the "very drab and deadly looking" television listings that newspapers were beginning to run. He created "a little cartoon that would spark the TV page and called it *Channel Chuckles*. I submitted it to the Register and

WHAT A COLD DARK AND DREARY DAY! MISERABLE!
HI, HON! YOU'RE JUST IN TIME FOR SOME HOMEMADE VEGETABLE SOUP
IT SEE IT'S GOOD TO BE BACK HOME AGAIN
DADDY! WE'RE HAVIN' HOT CHOCLIT WANT SOME?
THIS FIRE FEELS NEATO!
WE SAVED SOME OF THE JIGSAW PUZZLE FOR YOU TO DO
GRANDMA'S MAKIN' OATMEAL COOKIES! DON'T THEY SMELL GOOD?
LOOK AT THE DRAWING I MADE FOR YOU DADDY!
GAME'S TIED UP IN THE THIRD QUARTER

Tribune Syndicate, mainly because they were the ones that handled Blaner's *Spirit*.

"The odd thing, though," he continued, "when I first started, every week when I would put those into the mail to the syndicate, I'd come home and say to my wife, 'I'm never going to be able to think of another television gag again! I'm just about running dry.' That was 1954. I was still drawing the cartoon in 1976 when I voluntarily decided to fold it."

1959 was the turning point in Bil Keane's career. Tired of the nine-to-five shift, he quit his *Bulletin* job and sold "everything but the kids" to move his family to Arizona. Here, among the cactuses, he was inspired to draw his cartoons "right from life" as he watched his children scampering about the backyard or bouncing into the studio. When the magazines continually bought his family humor, Keane promptly roughed out an idea about the ordinary, uncontrived situations of family life. He modeled the characters after himself, his wife and their children—Gayle, Neal, Glen, Chris and Jeff.

"I drew it in a circle," he noted, "which was a novel idea since all panels are square. I called it *The Family Circle*; started it with a list of 19 newspapers on February 29, 1960.

"But after the thing had been running for about six months, we heard from *Family Circle Magazine*. They said they owned the title and very politely suggested that we should change it or they would turn it over to their legal department and bring action against us. The easiest thing was just to change our title. I changed the *le* to *us*; I made it *Family Circus*, which is indicative, a little more indicative, of what goes on in the feature anyway. However, I feel we could have fought that in court and won. I don't think there was any way they could have prevented a cartoonist or syndicate from using the name."

Under its new name, Keane successfully propelled *The Family Circus* to over 30 published collections, several merchandising items and three animated TV specials produced by Cullen-Kasdan Productions. Its popularity stems from the artist's great desire to maintain an aura of reality and a "touch of poignancy." When Jeffy was hospitalized for tonsillectomy in one sequence, Keane received many Get Well cards addressed to his character.

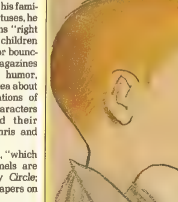
"I do it purposely," he admits, "because I feel the pleasure of reading a comic like *The Family Circus* does not necessarily come only from a laugh. While a laugh is pleasurable, you'd like to say, 'Oh, God! That's funny, that's funny! I *remember* that!' It's the fact that when you read my feature, you say just that! It's always igniting something in your own life, something within your own head, that makes it, more or less, a part of you. There's a more intimate appeal.

"I like nostalgia," he adds. "There's a

(Continued on page 44)

Of Circuses & Mickey Mouse

A Chat with Glen Keane



Glen, as viewed by Bil, 25 years ago.

Imagine watching your life pass by in the comics. For Bil Keane's children, it must have been an unusual growing experience. Then again, according to son Glen, it didn't phase him in the slightest. "I wasn't really attuned to the fact that he was watching us do stuff," Glen said in July. "We lived our lives normally."

Nevertheless, son Jeff now draws *The Eggheads*, and Glen is a Directing Animator at Walt Disney Productions, so art remains very much a part of the Keane family. We spoke with Glen at his studio inside Disney's Animation building and he talked enthusiastically about his work.

"I see a relationship between *Family Circus* and Disney in that there is a sincerity in both," Glen explained. "That was a word I kept hearing from Ollie [Johnston, one of Disney's greatest animators]; he was always saying that the characters must be sincere. The audience must believe in the characters; they can't be seen going through the motions. I don't think parents would have appreciated what their kids do as much without seeing those same things happening in *Family Circus*. They get a chance to laugh where before they would have been yelling at their kids."

This form of "sincerity" has been a staple of the Disney films since the beginning and has been reinforced by Glen's family background. As a Directing Animator, he sees how to bring this attitude to life. "The thing I always look for when I animate a scene is to make it something people can relate to. I'm doing a sequence in *Mickey's Christmas Carol* with Willie the Giant. He lifts Scrooge's roof and steps out into the street where it's dark. Willie picks up the streetlamp to use as a flashlight. Now, when I was a kid, I used to love turning the flashlight on and off, so I did that in the film with Willie. It's something really simple, but it gets such a neat reaction from the audience. At first, I wondered whether or not to bother, it's not even a gag . . . more a bit of character business, but it works."

MCC is only Glen's latest film project. Since joining Disney in 1974, he has been involved in every animated film released by the studio. Last year, he directed the bear fight sequence in *Fox and the Hound* —something which took nine months to animate but lasted only five minutes on screen. Before Disney, Glen wanted to do something with art but never knew what.

"Ever since I was zero, I've been drawing because of my Dad. I remember going into Dad's studio and asking him to teach me something about drawing. He never really pushed me into this, he never called me in and said, 'Let me teach you something about drawing.' He'd always wait for me to come in," Glen remembered.

Although not terribly aware that his life was being mirrored on a daily basis in hundreds of newspapers nationwide, Glen always felt it was an honor to be included in the one-panel feature. "I remember as a kid," Glen said, "I thought Dad drew *The Better Half*. I didn't know he drew *Family Circus*—they were both in circles. If we did something which got in, it would be fun to do see what you did. As a kid, you're never aware if what you're doing is cute or funny or anything. It would have been kind of weird if you did."

Glen cites Burne Hogarth's book *Dynamic Anatomy* as the primary source for his education in figure drawing. He kept sketching through high school and decided on an art career, perhaps as a political cartoonist. He sent a portfolio of political cartoons and paintings to the California School of the Arts (Cal Arts)

and received word that he had been accepted in the School for Film Graphics.

He chuckles now. At the time, he had no idea what the school was all about. "I didn't even bother to ask, I just went," he said with a laugh. "I went there and found it was a fancy way of saying 'cartoons.' " Glen fell in love with the Warner Brothers cartoons, but after discovering that their animation unit was closing, set his sights on Disney. Armed with some school and one summer's worth of experience at Filmation, he went to Disney looking for a job. They rejected him, saying he needed to learn how to do "quick life sketches."

Glen went to the local beach with seven 100-page notebooks and just began sketching. "I drew kids throwing frisbees, dogs running, girls in the water. I came back and they gave me a try. In the first four weeks, I had to do an animated film of whatever length to be reviewed." The first film involved a fly and a hungry frog. Happy with being passed, Glen admitted to getting cocky and trying a longer sequence for his second test film. "I was going to film a bear dancing to 'Singing' in the Rain.' I overshot my goal and never even finished."

Glen became Ollie Johnston's assistant, doing in-between drawings. Disney was in the midst of *The Rescuers* when Glen joined the company. He improved quickly and less than 10 years later, was named an Animating Director, inheriting the studio that Johnston occupied for 39 years. An AD, he explained, was given a sequence in a particular film to animate. This was Glen's long-term goal and it was reached more quickly than he ever expected. "My real goal now," he added, "is to do the animation and tell the stories I want to tell."

Unlike others, Glen isn't afraid of the increasing technology in the field of computer animation. When we spoke with him, Glen was preparing to conduct a test which would match computer-generated backgrounds with hand-drawn character animation. "This would mean no ink and paint, no layout, no xerox for the backgrounds. We'd save time and get the artist's design without break-up from the xeroxes; you'd get the inked line back again. I don't see computer animation replacing character animation, but as enhancing it. I was afraid because I didn't understand it. I like the pencil; anything with numbers gets me. I realized, though, this is something which can help me draw better."

The largest obstacle to overcome in employing computer graphics is to add human touches to the background. Glen complained that the computer makes things look too austere and cold.

If all goes well, computer animation may be utilized for one of the upcoming Disney animated projects, but definitely not *The Black Cauldron*, which has been underway for years (see Comic Reporter). Disney plans several new films including adaptations of several books. *The Brave Little Tooster* would be a *Dumbo*-like fantasy involving a toaster and other household items being left behind when a human moves. The mechanical objects leave to search for their master and end up in a junkyard, which to them represents a hideous graveyard. Another project, one which Glen spoke of excitedly, is *Who Censored Roger Rabbit?* a cinematic melange of live-action photography and animation. The world, according to this novel, includes humans, animals and "ani's"—animated cartoon characters who interact naturally with the others.

But the works remains on *MCC*. Glen is wrapping up the Willie segment; other animators are bent over their drawing tables bringing Mickey, Minnie, Donald, Goofy and Uncle Scrooge back to life after some 30 years of inactivity. "The old guys grew up on the major Disney characters," Glen observed, "This is where it all started. I feel I really learned a lot from all the guys who've worked on the picture. This has been the greatest experience I've had since I've gotten here."

With everyone so excited about *MCC*, despite the fact that the 10-week animator's strike has delayed the project an entire year, plans are now afoot to use the Disney characters in other settings. One such project might involve Goofy as Christopher Columbus with the others surfacing as indians, crewmembers and Queen Isabella.

"There's been a hesitation in the past," Glen said, "They've looked at the animation department and said, 'We don't have enough people to do what we want' rather than saying, 'Let's go out, recruit, and create a vacuum by sucking up as much talent as possible.' Now, we have reasons for our staff enlargement."

Glen offered the following advice to COMICS SCENE readers who may want to pursue a career in animation: "You should know figure drawing, humans, and animals. You must understand anatomy. Don't bother tracing Mickey Mouse or copying photographs with shading. Go out and study how people move in real life. Cal Arts is the best place in the world to study animation and Disney looks at the students there every year. It's been our main feeding ground.

"The next best thing is bring your portfolio to the studios. *If* you have the talent, they'll recognize it and train you." ■

—Robert Greenberger

Pencil layout by Glen shows Willie the Giant at play. Below is a finished scene from Mickey's Christmas Carol, a sequence Glen directed.

ART: ©1982 WALT DISNEY PRODUCTIONS

PHOTO: WILLIAM LUND

Bil Keane at his studio/home.

little bit of a tear that comes in your eye. . . That's not funny. . . it's part of life!"

Family picnics, holidays, school life and summer vacations are all a part of life depicted every year by Keane and inker Bud Warner. When the Keane family went camping or traveled across America, he carried a sketch pad and camera along to record actual sites to utilize in a future three week sequence.

"I like to have it authentic," he says, "particularly in my style of drawing I think it's mandatory to have authenticity. It doesn't have to look that way, but I like my readers to think that the *family* are actually there.

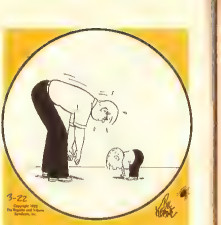
"I think if there's a philosophy shown in *Family Circus*, it is that of a home where there is love shown with the children, between the children, for one another, for their parents. . . That's the happiest place in the world for anybody!"

Erma Bombeck wrote in her introduction to *The Family Circus Treasury* that Keane is "synonymous with giving. The man is without a doubt one of the most generous givers of his talents you have ever met." He even participated in a 24-day USO tour to Viet Nam in 1967 when the Defense Department asked the National Cartoonists Society to entertain the troops. NCS was represented by Howie Schneider (*Eek and Meek*), Milwaukee *Journal* editorial cartoonist Bill Sanders and the late Willard Mullin ("the dean of sports cartoonists") in one group, while the second unit included Keane, then-NCS president Jack Tippit (*Jinny*) and *Wee Pals* creator Morrie Turner.

Keane's unit was escorted from Saigon to Da Nang, to military bases in between and beyond. "When I was over there, hearing all these mortars going off," he recalls, "And I kept wondering, 'What the hell am I doing here? I have five kids at home, a wife, I got a feature going. . . I don't *have* to be here! And here I am!

"Some of these guys that were in the intensive care wards. . . without limbs . . . and to make them laugh. . . or just to see," he painfully remembers. "We were going through one ward and I went by this one guy in bed. He was just white, absolutely white! Tubes coming out of his nose and, obviously, his leg was off under the sheet. Anyway, I went by. . . down to where I saw another guy looking at me. The colonel (in charge of the hospital) came over and asked, 'Why'd you pass this guy?' And I said, 'Well, he's. . . sleeping.' 'Will you do me a favor?' asked the colonel. 'Make a drawing and go over and talk to him.'

"So, I went over and sat down and said, 'Hi, I'm Bil Keane! Ever see the *Family Circus*?' The guy is just lying there, didn't move at all. He wasn't answering, but I made a drawing; it had Billy on there. I got his name off the tag on his bed, tore the drawing off and held it up for him. His eyes were just about half open and he sort



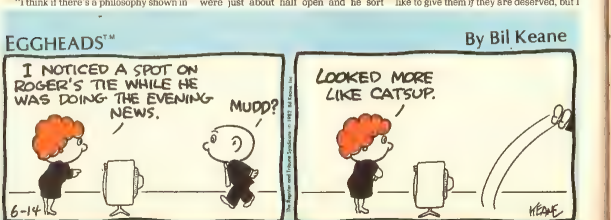
"I can touch my toes real easily, Daddy. Watch."

of. . . sort of smiled," Keane demonstrates. "He grabbed it, took a breath and leaned back. And then the colonel grabbed me and said, 'You know, that's the first reaction we've had out of him in days! I think he might make it.' Of course, you think, 'Well, jeez! That's worth flying over there!' You don't know how many guys you touched by just the fact that somebody cared enough to come over and spend time going through the hospital room."

Bil Keane's fellow cartoonists elected him to a two-year term as the National Cartoonists Society president in 1981. He is currently looking forward to the 1983 Reuben Award Dinner, which, he says, "for the first time in 37 years, it's going to be at the Century Plaza Hotel in Los Angeles on April 16th. Mell Lazarus will be the chairman of the dinner. It's part of the changing mood—nationalizing it so that it's not just a regional organization (operating) around and in New York City."

Although Keane has himself won the NCS award for Best Syndicated Panel three times, he believes that some award functions present too many awards. "I don't think any outfit should have an award they *must* give out, and then go scratching around to find somebody as a recipient," he remarks.

"As the President of the National Cartoonists Society, I like to hold down on the number of awards that are thrown about. I like to give them *if* they are deserved, but I


EGGHEADS™
By Bil Keane
I NOTICED A SPOT ON ROGER'S TIE WHILE HE WAS DOING THE EVENING NEWS.
MUDD?
6-14
LOOKED MORE LIKE CATSUP.
KEANE
The Register and Tribune Syndicate, © 1983 Bil Keane, Inc.

"And now, it's Miller time. . ."

don't see any reason to give a Silver T-Square Award just because we are having an award dinner. I think the category awards—and the Reuben, which is the top award for the Cartoonist of the Year—are reason enough to have your dinner."

Keane also created his first comic strip feature in 1981, adding to his heavy workload. "*Eggheads* has always been around," he professes. "In fact, when I started my Sunday *Family Circus* page, I ran a little section along the side called 'Sideshow,' in which I encouraged people to send in their puns. And I got thousands and thousands of letters! Not just kids sending them in—these were housewives, lawyers dictating them to their secretaries, old people, young people, clergymen, school teachers, people from all walks of life who loved puns. I know there's a big readership for puns out there, so, through the years, I've been threatening for the fun of it, just to get them out of my system, to start a feature.

"So I needed a name, and I wanted it to be sort of a tongue-in-cheek name, something that rather than having it the lowest class of humor as so many people say puns are, I wanted it to be cerebral. It's egghead humor! And *Eggheads* fits the characters, who look like eggs!

"It hasn't been a world beater . . . a big seller," he added. However, with the forthcoming collection of *Eggheads* comic strips to be published by Ballantine Books in April, Keane hopes "that it will pick up some of the papers that resisted because they were afraid to take a chance on something that is so simple and smacks at being out of the corn pile or something from way back. I keep it fresh by using names, expressions, places and things that are today—new material I write and send out to my son, Jeff, who does the drawings on *Eggheads* in Los Angeles. He's a good cartoonist; he imitates my format."

The comic illustrator has found his career to be "a satisfactory profession," with *Family Circus* read by an estimated 50 million people everyday in over 840 newspapers. The syndicate plans to increase that readership to 1,000 papers, a goal which only a few comic features have been able to achieve.

"My guess, that part of the problem is territory exclusivity," Keane surmises. "Some newspapers take in such a big area! If the syndicate can break that down, if they can make an arrangement with the paper to allow them to sell to some of the smaller newspapers within the territory—not in the very same city, but in the state where the paper now claims the rights to that territory—I think the Register and Tribune Syndicate can make a 1000. I sure hope they do!"

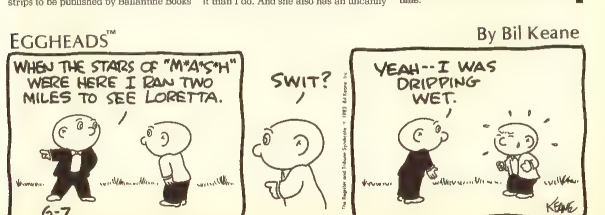
The *Family Circus* creator formed Bil Keane, Inc. several years back to insure that his cartoon features could continue to prosper without him, to carry on the legacy for his loyal readers. "The contract I have with the Register and Tribune Syndicate is with the corporation," he states. "I'm the president . . . and also an employee [creating the features] for the corporation, which then turns it over to the syndicate. Upon my death, the corporation would still have the contract. It would be up to my wife as the vice-president and secretary to take over and continue to supply the features.

"The[she] has been involved . . . closely enough through the years; I show everything to her before I send it to the syndicate. She handles all the business, handles a lot of the mail—except the stuff I have to write personally—and knows more about the financial and legal ends of it than I do. And she also has an uncanny knack for putting her finger on gags that are good, gags that are bad, gags that should be changed, a scene that isn't quite authentic, a line that might be put a little differently to make it more gentle or the way a child would say it. So, I don't think she would have any trouble continuing the features if she wanted to.

"Number one, I'll never retire! As long as I'm living and as long as I'm physically able to draw . . . and even after!"

Perhaps this is one major reason that Bil Keane has stood out as not just "another one of the crowd." Whatever the reason, his innovative creations will continue to entertain generations to come for a long time. ■

The above is the first Family Circus.



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Meet Trina Robbins

A conversation tracing her growth from reading comics to drawing Undergrounds to her work today

By BRUCE SWEENEY

Editor's Note: It's hard to pigeonhole someone like Trina Robbins because she works in so many different media, in just the past year, her creations have appeared in Fantaco's Chronicles *series,* Gates of Eden, Eclipse Magazine, Epic Illustrated, Deadspawn, *and* Bop! *among other places. The prolific and talented illustrator recently traveled from her San Francisco home to several conventions around the country and visited New York for two weeks. She has also collaborated with Cat Yronwode, on* Women and the Comics, *the first volume in Eclipse's* The Comics Hall of Fame Series *to be published in April. The 136-page trade paperback presents a chronological, pictorial view of those many talented women who have toiled in comics, comic strips, and animation since 1900.*

As the following interview demonstrates, the bouncy, energetic Robbins is an outspoken fan of "good girl art" and the role that women have played in comics since their four-color beginnings.

COMICS SCENE: Trina, could you bring us up to date on your current projects?

TRINA ROBBINS: I got the go-ahead from *Epic Illustrated* to do a 15-page color story I've been wanting to do, so I feel wanted, loved, and inspired. It's an adaptation of Elizabeth Lynn's *The Woman Who Loved the Moon*, which got the 1980 World Fantasy Award. When it is printed, it will be the first comic in a nationally distributed mag to deal with lesbianism, so that's a first.

CS: Can you tell us something about your early years and your background?

ROBBINS: I was born in Brooklyn, brought up in a German/Irish/Italian working class neighborhood in Queens. We were the only Jews, the only radicals. I wasn't allowed to tell my classmates who my parents voted for, and we still had a reputation for being Commies. Don't ask me why my parents lived there; I have no idea. It was certainly early training in learning how to be a misfit.

My father was a radical and an intellectual, so we never had any of the comic-carrying newspapers in our house, but he did buy *PM*, this left-leaning intellectual paper, which carried *The Spirit* sections every Sunday. I ate them up.

CS: What comics and cartoonists influenced your early years?

ROBBINS: As a kid, I was deeply influenced by just about *all* the superheroines. Superheroes didn't mean shit to me; I was aware of the existence of Superman and Batman, etc., but couldn't care less. One exception was Captain Marvel, whom I discovered through his sister Mary, and liked. Most important to me was Wonder Woman—Amazons! What girl can resist them? I *still* love Amazons!—and Mary Marvel—because she was the only superheroine who was actually a girl. (Imagine being able to fly, even though you're flat-chested! In secret, alone in my room, I used to whisper the word "Shazam" to my mirror, but nothing ever happened). I liked all the jungle heroines, too.

As for cartoonists who influenced me, the three biggest were Wally Wood, Matt Baker, and Will Eisner. Matt Baker drew many of the *Jungle Girl* comics I read, and in particular worked for Fiction House, which published comics with lots of strong women in major roles. These women were also very beautiful in a forties "pulpy" style.

Ficton House now epitomizes something called "good girl art," which is very sought after by collectors. Once at a convention, when I was buying some Fiction House comics, the dealer actually expressed surprise that I, a woman, should be buying such stuff! These guys don't seem to understand what a role model those comics can be to a young girl—telling her that she can be strong and beautiful, *and* in control of the situation.

PHOTO: JOHN CLAYTON

Trina speaks up at the Cartoonists' Guild panel discussion on Women and Cartooning.

ALL ART: © 1983 TRINA ROBBINS

Trina Robbins '82

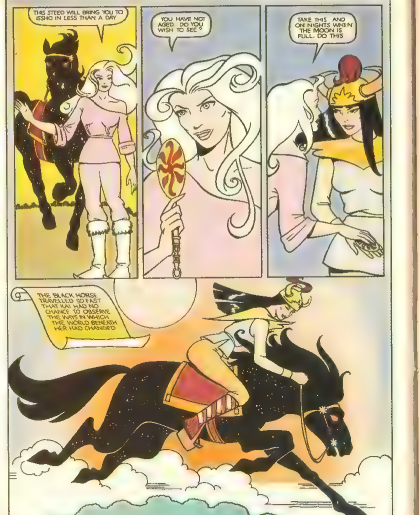
CS: How did you become associated with Undergrounds?

ROBBINS: I gobbled comics till I was 13, at which time my mother managed to convince me that I was a big girl now, and it was time to put away childish things. So, I gave my pile of comics away to the neighborhood kids. If I'd kept them, they'd probably be worth thousands, and isn't that a familiar story?

Anyway, all this time my parents, teachers, and I had taken it for granted that I would be an artist when I grew up—but somehow it never occurred to me that I could draw comics! My image of the Artist I was going to be was right out of the comics—a guy with a beret and a little beard who paints with oils on canvas in a garret with a skylight in Paris—I went so far as to take French in High School so I could easily live and paint in Paris! Then, I went to art school, and they taught enormous abstracts on wall-sized canvasses and nobody seemed concerned with whether or not you could draw. Here I was doing little drawings of real people and things on paper, and at a certain point, I got kicked out, like they were saying, "Thou are not an artist because thou dost not paint enormous wall-sized abstracts." So I thought, "OK, I'm not an artist, I just do these little drawings of real people and things on paper," and spent the next bunch of years being a baby beatnik, then, a hippy housewife, and then, in 1965, I got turned on to comics again—this time it was Marvels; all the hippies used to get stoned and read *Doctor Strange*, *Thor* and *The Fantastic Four*. I said, "Hey, those little drawings I've been doing all these years are comics!"

Being a hippy, I got the idea to do a *different* kind of comic—I called them "hip comics"—the word "Underground" didn't exist yet. The first comic I attempted was called *Captain Hip*, and because I tried to do it in Marvel style, which was all wrong for me, I never finished it. Shortly afterwards, someone showed me my first copy of the *East Village Other*—I was living in Los Angeles at that time—and I saw my very first Underground comix: a strip called *Captain High* and a wonderfully psychedelic thing called *Gentle's Tripout* by Panzika, whom I later found out was a woman. In summer '66, I moved to New York's Lower East Side, and immediately looked up a friend who worked for the *East Village Other* and almost as immediately, started drawing for them. The drawings were early comics, my big inspiration at the time was Aubrey Beardsley, which still accounts for my very black and white (no greys) style. They were also very psychedelic/Art Nouveau. I didn't pencil first, didn't know you were supposed to pencil first—I just went at it with a fine line marker. Of course, I wasn't getting PAID for the stuff I did for *EVO*—it was just such a thrill to be in print!

In 1967, I visited San Francisco. Some friends met me at the airport and handed


THIS STEED WILL BRING YOU TO EGBO IN LESS THAN A DAY
YOU HAVE NOT AGED. DO YOU WISH TO SEE?
TAKE THIS AND ONE NIGHTS WHEN THE MOON IS FULL. DO THIS
THE BLACK WORDS TRANSLATED TO ENGLISH. THAN YOU HAVE ONE CHANCE TO OBSERVE THOSE WHO HAVE BEEN WITH HER HAND CHANGED

A page from The Woman that Loved the Moon, running in Epic Illustrated #16.

me a copy of *Zap #1*—didn't say a word, just *handed* it to me, because they knew it would blow my mind. And it did. Until then, I had thought of Underground comix as something you could only do for Underground papers; it never occurred to me that you could actually do them as a comic *book*! I remember looking for Robert Crumb on Haight Street, only to be told I had just missed him, that he and his wife had been there selling copies of *Zap*.

CS: could you compare the early Undergrounds with some of the current "new wave" Undergrounds?

ROBBINS: Well, they have one thing in common—lack of story. In the early Underground days, many of us were so busy trying to do something new and unusual in the comic form that story fell by the wayside, especially when we were being psychedelic. The other thing they have in common is bad drawing. I always refer to the '60s as the stone age of Underground comix; even cartoonists who have since become quite polished were *dreadfully* crude in those days, myself included. Crude drawing is obviously something most beginning cartoonists share—and of course, out of each new batch of beginners, the majority will probably not improve much.

CS: And your thoughts on Undergrounds today?

ROBBINS: As I said previously, most of us sucked. Then, as the years pass, what happens is a kind of attrition. People who weren't totally committed to comics drop out; the field has lost its glamour for them or they find better paying jobs. The ones remaining are the maniacs who know they'll never get rich and don't care, those of us totally dedicated to comics, who never

want to do anything else. After all these years of living and breathing the stuff, we've actually gotten pretty good. Some of us have become good enough to sell to other publications which pay more than $30 a page. If you really love drawing comics, you don't care who you draw them for, so why not, for a change, get paid something for your work? Of course, it doesn't hurt that many of the publications are in color. For me, creating a comic is a little like playing God: I can create a universe, and having it printed makes it real—having it printed in color *really* makes it real!

CS: What happened to some of your earlier work such as Lulu?

ROBBINS: Groan. Lulu still holds up. It was a good story and I can still read that. I think I wrote a really good story with a neat concept: a story you can sing along with, with lyrics that worked that followed all these stories. I'm still proud of that. I wouldn't mind redrawing that since my work has improved.

Most of my early stories . . . I find them embarrassing in every way. A lot of my early stories are terribly self-consciously political in a feminist kind of way. Maybe I had to do that because we were working through a lot in the early '70's. It was time for that but now it's embarrassing. It's like reading a political tract.

CS: What about the more sexual character Panthea?

ROBBINS: Well, she's a good character. Maybe some day I'll do her again. She's in limbo. It's really that I draw so much better now.

CS: You really don't like looking at your early work now, do you?

ROBBINS: No, not at all. It's painful to see how bad I used to be. I'd rather look at my good stuff. I did the cover for the next *Wimmen's Comix*, which should be out in late winter or spring. If you ever come over to my house, you'll see, that I have a lot of original comic art on my walls but nothing by me. I never did anything that, when finished, I was proud enough that I said, "This is absolutely what I want it to be." The cover is exactly what I had in mind and it will be the first thing of mine that will go on the wall when I get it back from the printer.

CS: How do you feel about the current preoccupation with "good girl art" by Bill Black, Brad Foster, R.C. Harvey and others?

ROBBINS: When I see women reduced to nothing but gigantic tits 'n' ass, it's hard not to take it personally. Foster's *Jabberwocky Graphics* folder is beautiful—he does incredible detail and has a fantastic sense of design, but some of these guys must be incredibly alienated from women if this is how they see them.

CS: It's interesting to note that many female artists draw very sensual women as opposed to the "good girl art" which is blatantly sexy.

ROBBINS: Why don't those guys look at Matt Baker? Matt Baker's drawing perfect women, they're not sensual, they're even chic. They're real women. They don't have 97-inch breasts. Matt Baker's women are truly beautiful. These guys don't know what they're talking about. They're not doing Matt Baker. I mean, they're satirizing him, exaggerating him to the max. (Laughter).

CS: Caricaturing is nothing new to the Underground comix.

ROBBINS: As many people know by now, I have a lot of difficulty with Undergrounds both as a genre and as a term. I no longer consider myself an Underground artist. Certainly, the term has lost a lot of its original meaning and there's a lot of negativism to it now. Crumb's *Weirdo* has been fairly racist and sexist, and as for this new wave and punk art, I often find it stupid and poorly drawn. I find it hard to admire the inability to draw when I spend most of my waking hours trying to get better and to perfect my craft. I can't understand anyone being crude on purpose. Punk seems to be the glorification of the ugly, which I find impossible to relate to. Louis Comfort Tiffany said that all he wanted out of life was to create beauty. I'll be glad to bet on whose work will survive into the next century—Tiffany's or the punks'.

CS: What did you think of the Cartoonist Guild's panel on Women in Cartooning? (For a complete report, see Comics Reporter.)

ROBBINS: It was fabulous. God, it was so good that we were all together up there. I would call that the second greatest women's panel I've been on. The first was

Two pages from Trina's adaptation of Sax Rohmer's Dope. The left is from chapter one in Eclipse Magazine #2 and the right is chapter four from issue five.

this past summer in San Diego. It was a vast panel that represented a whole spectrum—there was Jo Duffy, Jan Duursema, Laurie Sutton, Carol Kalish and a bunch of Underground cartoonists.

CS: Will these panels help change people's perceptions on women in the comics?

ROBBINS: You know, I really don't know because I'm afraid that the people who come to these panels know about it already.

CS: How can the public perception be changed then?

ROBBINS: The only way to change the perceptions is to do the work and get it published in the publications and have people see you.

CS: Didn't you try that with *Playgirl*?

ROBBINS: I saw *Playgirl* and I said this publication needs a comic and it needs a comic by me. I called them up and they said, "Don't even come down, we have a policy, we don't ever want any comics." So I let it ride for about a year and I happened to be in Los Angeles with some really good material from *High Times* which I was really proud of. I made an appointment to see them and they said, "Gee, we love this stuff but you're a month too late. We just contracted for one page a month." And of course it was by a guy who's using a woman's name. That's really underhanded, you know?

CS: How did *Women and the Comics* come about?

ROBBINS: It has been my idea for years. When I finally met Mort Walker, I came over and said, "Boy am I glad to meet you. Did you know that you're the direct influence for my book?" And he said, "Yeah, I know."

In about 1976, I guess, he made this statement that women obviously did not have a sense of humor because there were no women cartoonists. At the time, *Women's Comix* was really going strong and someone brought a clipping to the Women's Cartoonists meeting. It was lynch fever. Shortly after that, someone sent me a program booklet from the big Italian convention at Lucca and the theme that year was women in the comics but as you know, they were talking about just the characters. They had an article by him about why there are no women cartoonists.

Drug Fiends
OF THE MARTIAN MOON
"ONCE THERE LIVED ON THE PLANET EARTH A YOUNG WOMAN NAMED GADA LITURK. ONE THING MADE HER DIFFERENT FROM ALL OTHER YOUNG TERRAN FEMALES.
"EVERY DAY SHE REPORTED TO THE DRIVE LABORATORY. THERE, IN THE CITY OF TOWN, WAS A PORTAL TO TELEPATH, AND THE DOCTORS AT THE DRIVE LABS WERE DEVELOPING THAT POTENTIAL.
TRINA
AND THEN ALONG CAME STEVE
"IN EVERY OTHER WAY, GILDA WAS AN AVERAGE YOUNG WOMAN. AND LIKE 9,000 OTHER AVERAGE MEN AND WOMEN ON EARTH, SHE WAS ADDICTED TO BEETLEJUICE. SHE HAD TRIED IT ONCE AT A PARTY, AND HAD DEVELOPED A DEPENDENCE ON THE DRUG. AND THE DEPENDENCE BECAME ADDICTION."

Drug Fiends appeared in Imagine #2 and represents one of the few collaboration Trina has done. This was with long-time boy friend Steve Leialoha.

toonists.

By the San Diego Convention, I was planning on throwing a pie at him and when he got mad I was going to say, "Gee you guys have no sense of humor." The trouble is this man is more respected than I am and if I pie him and he gets mad, I'll be the one that gets thrown out of the convention and not invited back.

But, a whole contingent of women turned up at a panel on humor in the comics with Mort Walker, Harvey Kurtzman and Dan O'Neill. Unfortunately, Harvey prefers to have all the questions from the audience written beforehand. I asked him how he felt about women having no sense of humor. Despite the fact that Harvey doesn't like interaction from the audience, the minute he started answering it, we got mad enough to start answering him. For instance, he said, "You know, this would be a good thing for women to do because they can do it and still take care of the children, do the cooking and take care of the laundry." I said, "Why do you persist in seeing all women as housewives?" A lot of the audience didn't want to hear us. We got up and walked out *en masse*. The nice thing was that a lot of the audience got up and left with us. That felt really good.

After that, I felt the only way to answer him was do the book and find every woman who has done comics and write about them and catalogue them. In my wildest fantasy, I march into the Cartoon Museum, slapping the book into Mort Walker's hand and say, "Here's your answer." As I've been working on the book I discovered how good and positive it's all been that I'm not mad at him anymore. Now that I met him at the Guild, I was delighted to meet him and now we're friends so it really has a happy ending.

CS: How many women will be included in the book?

ROBBINS: At least 200. Probably more. We're doing it in chronological order from 1900 with all the pictures we can fit in. I've been working on the book for three years or maybe four. It was with an agent for a long time . . . you want to hear a sense of sheer frustration? I'm very angry at the publishing companies. I think they're very short-sighted and very narrow-minded. If it's somebody that they don't know, they don't really pay attention to you.

The agent had no success at all; they kept coming up with all these excuses for not publishing it. Then god bless Dean Mullaney. I'll say that forever because he believes in me and he's going to publish it.

CS: What's it like living with another accomplished cartoonist like Steve Leialoha (now doing *Coyote* for Epic Comics)?

ROBBINS: At last, a subject that I feel positive about: artistic feedback and interaction with Steve. It should be pointed out that we're not the only comics people living here. Tom Orzechowski lives downstairs. As Steve says, "In this house, cartoonists are a dime a dozen." I feel very good about working with both Tom and Steve. They're supportive and when they criticize, it's constructively. In fact, I've always felt supported and accepted by most Marvel guys, which, as I'm sure you know, is very different from how I've always felt I was treated by the men in the Underground.

CS: In what ways has Steve influenced you?

[Continued on page 64]

WHAT'S AVE
DAMN I HEAR THAT DOOR?
HI — NEW SHOES?
CIGARETTE?
OH, THOSE CUTE, BUG-EYEDFRENCH PEOPLE!
FIRST TIME YOU'VE BEEN OUT ALL NIGHT!
NO MEDIUM
YOU I'M HEARING FROM MY FRIENDS UPSTAIRS IN HERE, HE SAID.
THANK YOU SO MUCH, MATHIS!
YOU'RE NOT DOING ANYTHING TONIGHT!
BOOM BOOM
BOOM BOOM

Lulu and the G-Men appeared in Dope Comix #2, just one of the many places Lulu turned up.

BUY THIS BOOK OR I'LL SHOOT THIS COYOTE !!
COYOTE
by ENGLEHART & LEIALOHA
AN EPIC COMICS PRODUCTION !
©ENGLEHART & LEIALOHA '82

Fandom

You Too Can Join an APA

By JAY ZILBER

Mark Evanier contributed the left cover to Capa-Alpha's 200th mailing while in 1971. Wendy Fletcher was an active apa fan. She now concentrates on Elfquest as Wendy Pini.

They've been around for over a hundred years, long before organized comics fans (or science-fiction fans) were around to adopt them. So it's a little odd that *amateur press associations*—apas for short—are still so little known. They survive to this day almost solely on the strength of word-of-mouth publicity, for in all this time there have been few serious attempts to bring this unique form of communication to the attention of mainstream fandom.

Apas have always had a difficult time getting publicity, partly because they are, indeed, so little known. They're not commercial endeavors, so they are never advertised. And though some apas may get an occasional short plug in a fanzine column here or there, these plugs don't tend to generate much interest because apas just can't be explained in a kernel of information 25 words or less. Apas can fulfill different purposes for different people, and at least seven definitions come to mind:

1. Apas are limited-circulation fanzines; in order to receive a copy, one must also be an active contributor to the apa.

2. Apas are the next-best thing to a comics convention, a fannish social get-together on paper.

3. Apas are the underground fan press, free of the "commercial" restraints and limitations of mainstream, high-circulation slick fanzines.

4. Apas are a system of centralizing correspondence which makes it possible to keep in touch with a large number of other fans at the same time.

5. Apas are an outlet for creativity and self-indulgence. They are an invaluable learning tool, through which one can develop writing, drawing and editing skills. They provide built-in feedback and constructive criticism on such creative endeavors.

6. Apas are where the old, tired fans go as an alternative to total gafiation.* And often, they are where the old, tired pros go for relaxation from their professional writing.

7. Apas defy clear-cut categorization in technical terms. Communication studies break down all media into two categories: *mass media* and *interpersonal media*. A mass medium—such as television, film, books, or this magazine—is a one-way system in which the Communicator sends a message to a group of Receivers, a large mass audience. If that audience wishes to relay their comments or reactions about this article to its author, they're met with various obstacles; they usually can't go back through the original medium and write their own article (or publish their own magazine) in order to make their reaction known. The obstacles are not insur-

*Gafiation (n), a common fannish buzzword from the root "gafia," an acronym for "Getting Away From It All."

mountable—hence, letters columns—but the original Communicator can get no direct or *immediate* feedback from his mass audience. That would require the use of a two-way system, an interpersonal *medium* (such as the telephone or, in the case of face-to-face dialogue, air), with which both parties have the opportunity to be both Communicators and Receivers in turn.

INSIDE THE APA

Obviously, there are many reasons for the appeal of apas; each member has his or her own individual attraction for being an active "apan," and the contents of an apa mailing is a mixed bag that reflects this diversity. CAPA-alpha was the first—and still one of the best—comics apas, and any recent mailing of CAPA-alpha showcases the full spectrum of what apas are all about:

Some members of CAPA-alpha (abbreviated K-a for esoteric reasons) are accomplished fan artists; they contribute superb illustrations and clever graphics, including a good deal of spectacular work that gives new life to the downtrodden "ditto" medium, imaginatively taking advantage of the so-called limitations of spirit duplicating. Other members are still learning the techniques of the craft; their inexperience betrays their enthusiasm and their work pales in comparison.

There is considerable discussion in K-a of all aspects of comics and comics fandom: behind-the-scenes news, reviews, indexes, speculations and such. Much of this discussion is insightful and well-informed, and some of it is insubstantial and short-sighted at best.

But comics are only a starting point—the discussion and commentary naturally spills over into related areas of science fiction, movies, television and home video recording, personal computers, and all areas of popular arts and culture. Personal trials, tribulations and tribulations are also given much attention; some members use K-a as a sort of diary in order to sort out their thoughts and feelings about current events in their lives, and their hopes for the future.

Occasionally, there is original fiction or comic strips that range from brilliant on down. A good deal of purely self-indulgent or experimental material is run through the apa, for, should a member want to try out some new creative ideas, there may be nowhere else to put it on display. While self-indulgence is not necessarily encouraged, it is certainly tolerated for the most part—at least until someone's material becomes completely unintelligible and he is no longer communicating but talking to himself.

For some, the bylaws and politics of K-a itself take an overwhelming prominence in their apazines, and new meaning is given to the concept, "the medium is the message."

There is fannish news, rumor and gossip, there are special group projects and collaborative one-shots, there are comics convention reports that alternate between truthful accounting of fact and wildly exaggerated nonsense. There are in-jokes of the sort that simply aren't the least bit funny outside of the apa's membership (and even *among* the membership they aren't funny except at four in the morning).

This is the stuff that apas are made of—all this and more. There is no pay or

CURRENT APA LISTINGS
(As of November 1, 1982)

APA-Centaur!
A small-scale, poly-little comics apa. Its topics also include SF, music, and general discussion. No waitlist. A good place for the beginning apan to learn the ropes.
Minimum Activity: 4 pages every three mailings
Frequency: Bi-monthly
Membership Limit: 20
Initial Fee: $3.00
Central Mailer: Douglas Mac
65-30 38th Avenue
Woodside, New York 11377

APA-I
For serious dats buffs. The "I" is for index, and members contribute detailed indexes of issues/by-issue story titles, credits and dates of comics, art-ist and writer checklists, and others. The emphasis is on comics, but cartoons, films, books, science fiction, fantasy and other topics are accepted. 200-page mailings are commonplace. George Chklewsky's Marvel indexes are included with mailings as they are published. APA-I currently has a short waitlist
Minimum Activity: 4 pages every mailing
Frequency: Quarterly
Membership Limit: 20
Initial Fee: $2.00 (soon to be increased)
Central Mailer: Gene Reid
3708 Lakewood Drive
Huntsville, Alabama 35811

APA-5
This was once arguably the most literate and interesting comics apa around. Fan-favorite artist Frank Mi1ler, among others was a member in its early years. More recently, APA-5 has gone downhill a bit, but a dedicated core of supporters are successfully struggling to keep it alive, and they're succeeding, having recently celebrated its 100th mailing. Still a good place for the beginning apan.
Minimum Activity: 6 pages every three mailings
Frequency: Monthly
Membership Limit: 30
Initial Fee: $1.00(?)
Central Mailer: Mike Bentley
19726 Forest Park Drive NE
Seattle, Washington 98155

CAPA-alpha
It has its ups and downs, but K-a was the first and is still one of the best comics apas. There is a long waitlist and slow turnover; expect to wait up to a year before being invited to join. Waitlisters may contribute and purchase back mailings depending on availability. A new Central Mailer will be elected to take office in January, 1983.
Minimum Activity: 4 pages every three mailings
Frequency: Monthly
Membership Limit: 40
Initial Fee: $3.00 (soon to be increased)
Central Mailer: Rocky Bornstein
20027 54 Community Street
Winnetka, CA 91306

[redacted]
No available data.
Central Mailer: Kevin O'Neill :)
11 Karen Avenue
Stratford, Connecticut

[redacted]
Named after the intergalactic language of the 30th Century, NTERLAC is devoted to comics, popular culture and the *Legion of Super-Heroes*. Large, 300-page mailings are not uncommon. The waitlist is long, but it moves quickly. INTERLAC is more comics-oriented than most comics apas, and you don't have to be a rabid *Legion* fan to join. A new Central Mailer will take office on February, 1983. Author Jay Zilber is a member.
Minimum Activity: 4 pages every three mailings
Frequency: Bi-monthly
Membership Limit: 30
Initial Fee: $3.00
Central Mailer: Ken Gale
220 East 85th Street, #5-R
New York, NY 10028

KLORDNY
Named for an esoteric 30th Century holiday, KLORDNY-ry is yet another apa for Legion fans. There is a short waitlist.
Minimum Activity: 2 pages every two mailings
Frequency: Bi-monthly
Membership Limit: 25
Initial Fee: $1.00
Central Mailer: Brad Horning
190 Dirkman Road
Kelowna, British Columbia
Canada V1X 1T7

[redacted]
A bi-monthly comics apa. No other data available
Central Mailer: James Yancey
3714 West 10th Street
Indianapolis, Indiana 46222

NYAPA
Originally the New York Amateur Press Association, but by no means limited to New York. Intimate, off-the-wall fannishness, just peripherally comics-related. Creation's Adam Malin, DC's Paul Levitz and Neal Pozner and COMICS SCENE's Robert Greenberger are former members
Minimum Activity: 4 pages every two mailings
Frequency: Bi-monthly
Membership Limit: 20
Initial Fee: $1.00 [?]
Central Mailer: Tom Mack
665 Somerville Avenue
Tonawanda, New York 14150

PHOENIX
Another good place for the beginning apan to start out. Five years old and still growing.
Minimum Activity: 3 pages every three mailings
Frequency: Bi-monthly
Membership Limit: 30
Initial Fee: $2.00
Central Mailer: Alan Turnlansky
148 Broadway #3-B
Lynbrook, NY 11563

[redacted]
Its subject slants more toward science fiction, but the "SF" in the title actually stands for Southern Fandom (Press Alliance), and its constitution requires that a certain percentage of its membership be residents of the states of the old Confederacy. Waitlisters may contribute to a separate section called Shadow-SFPA. Its recent 100th mailing contained over 1500 pages!
Minimum Activity: 4 pages every two mailings
Frequency: Bi-monthly
Membership Limit: 30
Initial Fee: $2.00
Central Mailer: Guy H. Lillian III
182 South Mendenhall #3
Greensboro, North Carolina 27403

VOOTIE
For serious cartoonists of the funny-animal genre. Enclose samples of your artwork with your initial fee.
Minimum Activity: 1 page every two mailings
Frequency: Bi-monthly
Membership Limit: None
Initial Fee: $1.00
Central Mailer: Larry Becker
3557 26th Avenue South
Minneapolis, Minnesota 55406

[redacted]
The Western Amateur Press Association, though not exclusively limited as such, is a regional comics apa for those living west of the Mississippi. Three years old and still growing. A short waitlist
Minimum Activity: 3 pages every three mailings
Frequency: Bi-monthly
Membership Limit: 25
Initial Fee: $3.00
Central Mailer: Tom Bierbaum
1880 Termino Avenue #2
Long Beach, CA 90815

X-APA
An offshoot of INTERLAC, but for *X-Men* fans. This one's just a couple of years old. Its present Central Mailer is scheduled to marry the present CM of WAPA in September, 1982.
Minimum Activity: 4 pages every two mailings
Frequency: Bi-monthly
Membership Limit: 25
Initial Fee: $2.00
Central Mailer: Mary Gilmore
1880 Termino Avenue #2
Long Beach, CA 90815

FROM THE PERSONAL FILES OF INSPECTOR NICHOLAS MCMANUS, N.Y.P.D. 7:00 A.M. APRIL 7!
I FELT SICK AND IT WASN'T JUST LIEUTENANT LARSON'S COFFEE I HAD HAD.
THE BODY THEY WERE PULLING OUT OF THE BAY WAS THE THIRD I'D FOUND IN THE PAST TWENTY-SIX HOURS. AND I'D KNOWN ONE WEDNESDAY BORN IN A BATHTUB BESIDE HIS MOTHER.
ONE WEDNESDAY BORN IN A BATHTUB BESIDE HIS MOTHER. JAMIE WILLIAMS, ONE OF MY BILLION PAL'S. I'D HAD A DRINK WITH HIM A FEW SECONDS OF LIFE IN HIM, AND HE HADN'T SOLD ME A DAMN THING ABOUT HIS ONE
THE REAL AND THE BIGGIES WERE GETTING CRUDE TO DOTTEN ON THE STREETS. I'D HEARD THAT JIMMY WILLIAMS HAD BOTTLED A FEW KILOGRAMS OF THE STUFF AND WAS SELLING IT WITH HIS WHITE AND STUFF AS AN EXTRA-STRENGTH SWEET AND SIX HOURS CLEAN.
IN A FEW MINUTES I'D CALL THE TUBES AND TELL HIM ABOUT IT. LIKE WILLIAMS, HE'D GOT IT WITHIN A FEW BLOCKS OF HIS BIRTHPLACE. I'D MAKE SURE THERE HAD TO BE A CONNECTION.
I WONDERED HOW MANY MORE I'D FIND LIKE THIS.
I WANTED TO NEVER TO HAVE YOU CUTS ON, ME OUT OF THE DEAL.
FRANK MILLER

A young Frank Miller contributed to apas and this sample page shows, even then, a sense of design and drama that has since matured into some the finest comics work done today.

compensation except in terms of personal fulfillment. Apas reflect every stage of fanishness, from the wide-eyed neophyte to the burnt-out gafiate. Apas are networks of communication and life-long friendships that never have developed in any other way. They are an integral part of the universe of fandom . . . but to truly understand the attraction of belonging to an apa, one must experience it first-hand.

The mechanics of apas are fairly simple, though they may at first seem confusing to the uninitiated. Since each apa has slightly different policies, I will continue to use CAPA-alpha as a useful prototype.

In order to join K-a, a would-be member starts by sending an initial fee of $3.00 to the current Central Mailer. Some apas require new members to be sponsored or voted into membership; this is not the case with K-a, but full membership still does not come right away. As a matter of practical logistics, K-a has a size limit of 40 members and presently has a modest waitlist. A new would-be member is sent a sample copy of the current K-a mailing and his name is placed at the bottom of the waitlist. Membership turnover may be slow; it may be several months, possibly a year or more, before a slot opens up for him. In the meantime, waitlisters may contribute to the apa as though they were already members, but can only purchase copies of mailings when they are at least three months old—and then, only if sufficient extra copies remain available.

At length, the patient waitlister is invited to join the apa. In order to attain membership, he must now produce an apazine; K-a requires that members contribute at least four pages of original material to every third mailing. (This is the minimum required activity, or "minac," to use the inside jargon; of course, one may contribute more often and in greater volume, as in fact most CAPA-alphans do.) The new member is responsible for printing his apazine, or arranging for its printing; he must deliver 50 collated and stapled copies of his zine to the Central Mailer by the stated deadline (usually the first day of each month) and keep his postage account in the black. If he fails to meet minac, copycount, finances or deadline, he risks being dropped from membership, though extensions are sometimes granted under extraordinary circumstances.

The Central Mailer is elected annually; he is a member of K-a who, in return for only the real or imagined glamor or egoboosting the post has to offer, has opted to take on the tremendous responsibility of seeing that the mechanics of the apa remain well-oiled and that the mailings come out on time. He manages the apa's business and finances; he organizes the apazines as they arrive in the mail from the 40-odd members and waitlisters around the country, collates their stacks of apazines into 50 identical volumes that contain one copy of each zine, publishes the apa's Official Organ, and mails the bound copies of the mailing to the entire membership.

All this is much more work than can be suggested in the time it takes to describe it, and it's why most apas have a membership size limit; otherwise, the work of managing K-a would increase to the point where it would have to be a salaried full-time job.

After its long, torturous trek through the Postal Service, the member finally receives his copy of the mailing and reacts it with all due enthusiasm. Perhaps he jots down some notes as he reacts to someone else's comments that he wants to discuss in his next apazine. The cycle continues every month, as it has with only one interruption since K-a's first mailing in October, 1964.

WHERE IT ALL STARTED

Actually, the concept of the amateur press association goes as far back as the late 19th Century—long before comics or SF fandom existed—with the formation of the National Amateur Press Association (NAPA) and other "mundane" amateur journalism apas. NAPA was founded in 1876 and was originally seen as a sort of training ground for professional journalists. Indeed, many early amateurs did "graduate" to become professionals, and the Association saw this as the most defensible role for NAPA.

At the outset, the inner workings of the original apa were worlds away from the present-day fannish version. In this early concept of NAPA, members were loosely organized by a constitution drawn up at a national NAPA convention, but the gist of it was that members were simply instructed to send copies of their amateur journals and publications to one another.

NAPA only began to evolve into the more modern concept of apas because of the lack of cooperation from the United States Post Office. NAPA's organizers had tried to get their individual amateur journals declared eligible for Second Class mailing privileges without success. As an alternative, they established a centralized mailing bureau; any interested publisher could send their journals to the bureau manager, who would in turn distribute them in bundles to the Association members. Some took advantage of this service, while others continued as before to send their publications directly to one another. As a result, these "private" mailings were not always fully distributed to the entire membership, and only the most active members could expect to receive both the privately-mailed, limited-circulation magazines and the centrally-distributed bundles. NAPA did not even actually require members to publish anything at all, so that an interested but inactive member might receive only the bundles.

This separation of active and non-active members brought about a bizarre class separation of amateur publishers. NAPA also encountered a number of other problems during its formative years; its members rarely used their journals to communicate with one another, and many would-be publishers experienced difficul-

(Continued on page 64)

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#2 Jack Kirby on 40 years in comics; Joe Sinnott, Jim Starlin interviews, John Byrne on creators' rights, David and Leslie Newman on writing for the movies; Carl Barks book preview; and of course, *Judge Dredd!*

#3 Don Bluth reveals *The Secret of NIMH*, Frank Miller on comics today; Bob Layton on *Hercules*, Bill Stout on storyboarding *Conan*; Len Wein on *Swamp Thing*, Osamu Tezuka part one; Jack Katz part one; and *Dick Tracy* turns 50.

#4 Marvel's creators talk about the *Conan* comics, *Conan* photo preview and merchandising news, Richard and Wendy Pini with publishing tips; Is *Legion* fandom dead? learn to letter comics; *Prince Valiant* and *Barney Google*; and Gene Colan part one.

#5 Burne Hogarth's career; Batman's Jim Aparo, Inkers' Forum Part I; Moebius' new movie; Turning movies into comics; Gene Colan Part II and lots more.

#6 *Camelot 3000* preview and full-color poster; *Crusader Rabbit* Part I; Inkers' Forum Part II, Martin Pasko on creators' rights, *Captain Easy*, Saturday TV.

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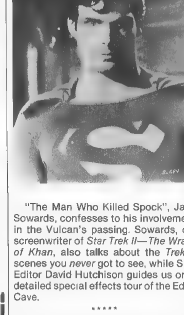
COMING IN STARLOG #67

STARLOG soars into 1983 with an *exclusive* preview of one of this summer's most eagerly-awaited blockbusters, *Superman III*. Producers Ilya Salkind and Pierre Spengler take us behind the scenes in an information-filled interview featuring many full-color photos of the Man of Steel in action and romance.



"The Man Who Killed Spock", Jack Sowards, confesses to his involvement in the Vulcan's passing. Sowards, coscreenwriter of *Star Trek II—The Wrath of Khan*, also talks about the *Trek II* scenes you *never* got to see, while SFX Editor David Hutchison guides us on a detailed special effects tour of the Eden Cave.

* * * * *

We'll be hijacking *Airplane II*, starring William Shatner; revving up with *Warlords of the 21st Century*; and chatting with Steve Lisberger, the wizard director who conceived *TRON*'s video world. STARLOG also visits the set of *Strange Invaders* and mingles with the aliens among us.

* * * * *

Bjo profiles *Fandom Directory*. David Gerrold dissects *Star Trek* games of war and peace while Ed Naha explains why the book is almost always better than the film. That's about it—except — wait a minute — there's also a *FREE* Bonus pull-out of the world's most adorable extraterrestrial, *E.T.* You'll meet them all soul-to-soul and heart-to-heart when the issue goes

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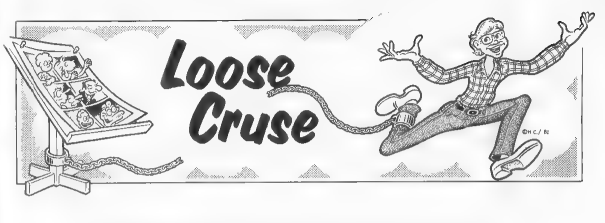

The Other Side of the Coin

By HOWARD CRUSE

Part 3 of our look at parody in the comics—what can and can't be done.

The first parody I ever saw was in the first *Mad* I ever saw, back in the days when weird little people cavorted inside that magazine's logo. The feature, drawn by Wally Wood, was titled "If Comic Strip Characters Answered Those Little Ads."

Quibblers will note that it technically wasn't a parody; however, it did contain parodic elements. My jaw dropped in amazement at drawings of Nancy answering an ad for hair straightener and Dagwood responding to a body building pitch. There were before-and-after pictures of Henry, Popeye, Alley Oop and The Phantom wherein each was transformed by having clipped out a tacky back-of-the-book magazine ad.

What amazed me was seeing these diverse characters mingling in a single feature drawn by a single artist's hand. I'd naively assumed that such liberties weren't allowed, that no one could publish a drawing of Nancy other than Ernie Bushmiller himself. Couldn't these people get sued?

But what a thrill for me, like stepping without warning into the unstructured surrealism of the dream state! Suddenly, cartooning was invested with new and giddy potentials. Batman might patrol the night alongside Casper the Friendly Ghost. Pinocchio could share puppet gossip with Howdy Doody.

At that point, literary criticism and social commentary were far from my mind. I liked parody simply because it could break the normal rules.

Breaking rules makes parody fun, but criticism and commentary are what make it an art form of substance. Just as most of us are initially drawn to movies which dazzle, tickle or scare us without providing any interesting insights about the human condition, most of us have cut our teeth on parodies which were designed to amuse us without making us think. (Nancy's hair looks like a Brillo pad—so what? A parodist points that out and we laugh, but we're not broadened by the experience.) The philosophically unthreatening themes of most parodies in today's *Mad* have encouraged us to view parody itself as an inherently trivial diversion.

Above and below: Bushmiller's Nancy, as drawn by Wally Wood, finds a cure for kinky hair.

But a thoughtful parodist can use the form to substantial effect. Harvey Kurtzman, editor of the formative *Mad*, used parody and other forms of satire to short-circuit our habitual responses to familiar images, enticing us with broad comedy into more skeptical frames of mind. He reminded us that Mickey Mouse was a *mouse*, one of those unsanitary rodents that make us feel queasy if they scamper across our bare feet in a dark kitchen.

Skepticism is crucial in a society flooded with deceptive packaging. It's all too easy to let the "willing suspension of disbelief," which permits us to believe that Christopher Reeve can fly, carry over to the calculated images prepared by ad agencies who want to sell us a Ronald Reagan or a Jimmy Carter.

Parody reminds us that we are capable of stepping back from the machinations of busy manipulators and laughing at—or rebelling against—that which insults our intelligence. If the manipulation is benign, we can always reenter the illusion. No one's ability to enjoy a Mickey Mouse cartoon is permanently sabotaged by a Kurtzman parody. But by being reminded that appealing images are not the same as reality, we are less the prisoners of the gears and pistons of illusion which propel our art, shape our opinions, and potentially regiment our lives.

The Air Pirates (see my last two columns) did not consider the manipulations of Walt Disney Productions benign. They chose parody (mixed with bawdiness and burlesque) to make their point. They weren't laughing at Mickey Mouse

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because his ears were round; they were satirizing the idea *behind* the Mouse. While opinions on their point of view are divided, most of us were forced to give fresh thought to some real issues. Art forms that stimulate fresh thought are not to be taken lightly.

In a modest way I had social commentary in mind when I drew "The Nightmares of Little L*i*t*," a *Little Lulu* parody which ran in a 1978 underground comic book called *Snarf* #6. On one level, I poked silly fun at a favorite old character, but I was also reflecting on how troubled childhood can be beneath a carefree surface. Maybe yours wasn't; mine was.

Drawing that parody, I had a vague sense of rules which should be followed. I assumed that my piece should be easily distinguishable from its Dell/Gold Key model. No problem! My piece opened with Lulu as an adult, which no real *Lulu* story would ever do. My piece was in black & white, located inside a comic book targeted specifically at adults. All of the characters' names were altered. In my visual depictions of the characters, however, I tried to duplicate the prototypes exactly. I assumed that was allowed. I'd seen *Mad* do it a hundred times.

Snarf#6 was in production when I first got word of the 1978 ruling by the Ninth Circuit Court of Appeals. Soon the Supreme Court, by refusing to hear the Air Pirates' appeal, had left that ruling as the most authoritative precedent relating to comic strip parody. It wasn't the final word; courts in other geographical areas could hold a different opinion. But there was no way to know how the blade would cut until the parodist's head was already in the guillotine.

Take this matter of "verbatim copying" — exactly what I had done in my *Lulu* parody. That was, in turn, the Ninth Circuit now was telling me. *Mad* had led me down the primrose path. Suddenly, I was hearing a new (to me) principle: that no more of an original could be copied "than is necessary to 'recall or conjure up' the object of [a] satire."

That restriction pulled the rug out from under the kind of parody I had grown up enjoying, parody that looks like that which is being parodied, without saying exactly how much original images had to be modified. This left individual artists like me completely at sea if we wished to obey the law—unless we declined to attempt parody at all.

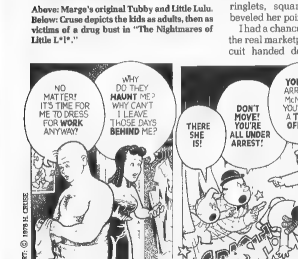
In his "Communique #1 from the MLF Front" (*CoEvolution Quarterly*, Spring 1979), Dan O'Neill puzzled over the same ambiguities that had me scratching my head. How much must a parody of Mickey Mouse alter the Mouse's image? Is changing a four-fingered hand to a five-fingered one enough? Will transplanting Mickey's head onto a furry rodent's body leave the parodist secure? I reflected on my own work: how might I have changed my *Lulu* parody had I anticipated the court's decision? Should I have given her extra ringlets, squared-off her hairballs or beveled her pointed nose?

I had a chance to practice such games in the real marketplace. When the Ninth Circuit handed down its ruling, by coincidence, I was regularly creating short parodies of popular syndicated comic strips for *Playboy*. Lawyers for the syndicates were responding to the parodies (my own and those of other artists) with surly letters, and *Playboy*'s lawyers were getting uneasy, what with the turn things were taking for the Air Pirates. Several of my previously accepted strips were returned to me and I was instructed to do them over, changing the look of the characters so that they *differed from* but still conjured up the originals. So I set to work. If a nose hooked down, I bent it upward. I fiddled with hairdos, supplied new wardrobes. The revised versions bounced around *Playboy*'s bowels for a while but were ultimately returned to me, paid for but never published. The legal waters were just too murky for *Playboy*'s lawyers, so syndicate pressure carried the day. Comic strip parodies disappeared from *Playboy Funnies*.

Not an earthshaking cultural loss in itself, but an example of how vague laws result in self-censorship. And it's the controversial, challenging ideas, the ones that go beyond *Playboy*'s sexual silliness, the ones that parody is particularly well-equipped to communicate, that get killed. Individual artists cannot be blamed for taking note when wealthy *Playboy* knuckles under. The message is clear: keep your parodies to yourself if the ideas they ex-

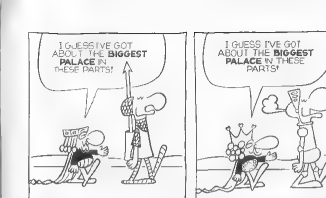
ART © MARVEL ENTERTAINMENT GROUP

Above: Margo's original Tubby and Little Lulu. Below: Cruse depicts the kids as adults, then as victims of a drug bust in "The Nightmares of Little L*i*t*."

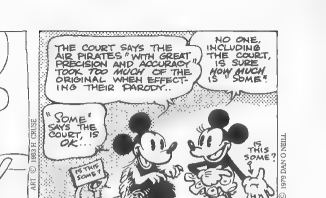

NO MATTER! IT'S TIME FOR ME TO DRESS FOR WORK ANYWAY!
WHY DO THEY HAUNT ME? WHY CAN'T I LEAVE THOSE DAYS BEHIND ME?
THERE SHE IS!
DON'T MOVE! YOU'RE ALL UNDER ARREST!
YOU CAN'T ARREST US, MUNABEE! YOU'RE JUST A TRUANT OFFICER!
HAVEN'T YOU HEARD? HE'S BEEN TRANSFERRED TO THE NARCO SQUAD!
WAH! LEMME OFF, COPPER! I'LL SQUEAL!
DOP!
ART © 1978 R. CRUSE

Cruse's Barefoots (left) makes an unauthorized appearance (right) in R. Crumb's 1974-78 Sketchbook published by Zweitausendeins.

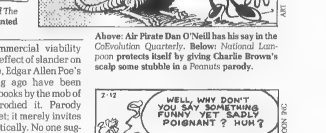
Herriman's Krazy Kat and Ignatz were among the famous extras in Sam's Strip, an offbeat syndicated parody feature by Mort Walker and Jerry Dumas.


I GUESS I'VE GOT ABOUT THE BIGGEST PALACE IN THESE PARTS!
I GUESS I'VE GOT ABOUT THE BIGGEST PALACE IN THESE PARTS!
ART © TREND ONLINE

Two versions of the same panel from Cruse's unpublished *Playboy* **parody of** *The Wizard of Id*. **In response to the Air Pirates ruling,** *Playboy* **lawyers wanted altered characters (above right) instead of exact copies (above left).**


THE COURT SAYS THE AIR PIRATES, WITH GREAT PRECISION AND ACCURACY, TOOK TOO MUCH OF THE ORIGINAL WHEN EFFECTING THEIR PARODY..
NO ONE, INCLUDING THE COURT, IS SURE HOW MUCH IS SOME.
SOME SAYS THE COURT IS OK.
IS THIS SOME?
IS THIS SOME?
ART © TREND ONLINE

Above: Air Pirate Dan O'Neill has his say in the *CoEvolution Quarterly*. **Below:** *National Lampoon* **protects itself by giving Charlie Brown's scalp some stubble in a** *Peanuts* **parody.**



press challenge the interests of the powerful.

Which leaves us with mediocre parody that threatens nobody. This consequence is of scant concern to Judge Cummings, who wrote the Ninth Circuit decision. He explicitly says that we'll just have to make do with less than the "best parody" in order to protect the rights of copyright holders.

It's nothing new to assert that certain conditions may justify limitations on free speech. We can't have someone yelling "Fire!" in a crowded theater, we're repeatedly reminded. Laws banning libel and slander limit the written and verbal options of those inclined to irresponsibly destroy the reputations of others, recognizing that person's ability to earn a living or exist without harrassment in society can hinge on an honorable reputation.

But I don't think the effect of parody on a copyright holder's commercial viability can be compared to the effect of slander on a reputation. Otherwise, Edgar Allen Poe's *The Raven* would long ago have been drummed from the textbooks by the mob of losers who have parodied it. Parody doesn't destroy its target; it merely invites the reader to view skeptically. No one suggests that we restrain professional criticism which pursues the same goal via expository prose. Having one's art ridiculed is one of the classic risks of performing in the public arena. The fact that criticism can be all the more incisive when cast in the mold of parody is reason for cheering, not scrambling to shave off portions of the Bill of Rights.

Parody is the literary equivalent of political cartoons. Instead of caricaturing public figures, the parodist caricatures other works of art. Because of the clear-cut impact that politicians have on our daily lives, the need for a skeptical citizenry is obvious, and the law guarantees great leeway for the Herblocks, Oliphants and Trudeaus who keep us on guard against political tomfoolery.

Dishonesty or shallowness in the arts may not appear as important as they are in politics. After all, nobody's cutting back aid to handicapped children because of Mickey Mouse's grin—right? Or are they? Much in our culture hinges on what our values truly are, as opposed to what values we give lip service to. The arts both reflect and shape the values we live by, work by and make critical editorial decisions by. Paying attention to the arts means paying attention to the kind of world we are in the process of building.

A judge who ruled that we must abandon aiming for the best political cartoons possible would provoke gasps of alarm. As a matter of fact, the First Amendment is there to make sure that we permit the best novels, plays, songs and essays possible. Parody is an art form with peculiar limitations that guarantee it will never play the large role in our culture that the novel does. But there are certain kinds of ideas for which parody is the best possible vehicle. Shall we demand that these ideas be expressed in softer, less trenchant, less persuasive terms?

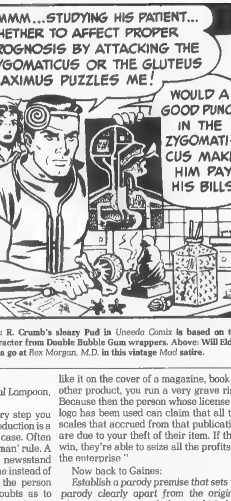
Walt Kelly's Pogo dons blank eyeballs to spoof Harold Gray's Little Orphan Annie as "Li'l Arf an' Nonay." More burlesque than strict parody, the style and characters remain identifiably Kelly's.

And to use the form, one needs the tools of the form. In his 1972 deposition in the Air Pirates' defense, Gary Hallgren wrote, "Walt Disney has presented me and the public with a coin that has been 'heads up' for more than 40 years. I am aware that there are at least two sides to every coin . . . and in order to see what is on the 'tail' side, I must pick up that very coin and turn it over." Exploring the hidden facets of the Mickey Mouse myth is not accomplished with comics about a mouse who is vaguely similar. It is the use of the *exact image* that gives parody its special emotional power.

Fairness dictates that when parody is sold commercially, the consumer should know that he is buying a satirical alternative instead of the original. One needn't outlaw the use of the exact image to accomplish this. The traditional practice of altering titles and characters' names serves that end quite well; indeed, to mandate that a piece carry the word "parody" as a prominent label would not be a major intrusion on the work's integrity. I'm specifically talking about comic strip parody in this article, and in a comic strip the picture is first to hit the eye. A label may be read, understood and left behind as the main artistic experience moves ahead.

It's also fair to expect that a parody of a particular work (as opposed to a genre) be a one-shot affair. To proceed with a continuing series suggests that commercial ex-

NOW LOOK HERE BABY, YOU GOT SUCH BIG FINE LEGS, AINT YOU GOT NOTHIN' BETTER T'DO THAN ALWAYS BE SNAPPIN' THAT BUBBLE GUM?!
PUD! PLEASE DONT!
ART © HANK KETCHAM


HMMM...STUDYING HIS PATIENT... WHETHER TO AFFECT PROPER PROGNOSIS BY ATTACKING THE ZYGOMATICUS OR THE GLUTEUS MAXIMUS PUZZLES ME!
WOULD A GOOD PUNCH IN THE ZYGOMATICUS MAKE HIM PAY HIS BILLS?
ART © E.C. PUBLICATIONS, INC.

Left: R. Crumb's sleazy Pud in *Uneeda Comix* **is based on the character from Double Bubble Gum wrappers. Above: Will Elder has a go at** *Rex Morgan, M.D.* **in this vintage** *Mad* **satire.**

plottation has supplanted the initial impulse toward satiric criticism.

It seems clear to me that fairness to both the parodist and the copyright holder can be assured without defanging the parodist's medium or intimidating the artist into self-censorship. As things stand now, unfortunately, the powerful copyright holder who can afford to sustain expensive lawsuits holds most of the cards. Let a lawyer tell you about it:

"There are no direct guidelines that one can compare one's drawings to and say, 'I'm on *this* side of the line, I'm fine,' or 'I'm on *that* side of the line, I'm definitely going to be considered a copyright infringer!' " Timothy Jensen is speaking; he's a staff attorney for New York's Volunteer Lawyers for the Arts. "If somebody wants to sue, they can sue. If you do something that we would consider a legitimate parody of Walt Disney and Walt Disney is offended, then Disney can absolutely sue you—even if they have a terrible case. Very often, even if they *have* a terrible case, they'll have big enough guns and a large enough law firm and enough money to spend, and they'll simply beat you down.

"It's a disturbing situation, because you really have justice being available to those who can afford it and not to whose who can't."

So what about you fledgling parodists out there who want to know what's allowable at present? Well, you can't be entirely safe, but there are ways of improving your odds of survival.

Don't copy exactly. I bite my tongue as I say it. So while I'm biting, I'll let Henry Beard, formerly of the *National Lampoon*, speak:

"I'm not a lawyer, but every step you take away from an exact reproduction is a further strengthening of your case. Often they use sort of a 'reasonable man' rule. A reasonable person passing a newsstand sees a magazine that says *T'me* instead of *Time*. You could argue that the person should have some serious doubts as to whether that's *Time* magazine. Maybe you obscure part of the *E* with a little banner that says *Parody Issue*. Maybe you choose something as subject matter that is immediately and obviously funny. There's no place where you're absolutely safe; where you're absolutely unsafe is when you just use their logo."

Now for some suggestions from William Gaines, publisher of *Mad*, who cautions, "There are no legal rules on this. I made up this set of rules for myself, from which I didn't seem to get into any trouble."

One time use only. *Mad*, of course, may hit *Peanuts* a hundred times, but each time it's from a distinct parodic angle, and the magazine isn't sold on the basis of any continuing Peanuts satire. "I don't think it's fair to take something and use it constantly. If you hit 'em once, it's more accurately portrayed as some kind of criticism."

Don't put it on the cover. That's a rule which Gaines admits he has violated, but he still says that keeping the parody inside the book is "just more proof that you're not trying to commercialize on it." Henry Beard enlarges on this point: "If you use someone's characteristic style or logo, if you use their character or one very much like it on the cover of a magazine, book or other product, you run a very grave risk. Because then the person whose license or logo has been used can claim that all the scales that accrued from that publication are due to your theft of their item. If they win, they're able to seize all the profits of the enterprise."

Now back to Gaines:

Establish a parody premise that sets the parody clearly apart from the original. This is the famous and oft-copied *Mad* approach. "If Comic Strip Characters Answered These Little Ads," etc. Many parodists choose to do this more obliquely than does *Mad*, but an artist is merely stealing unless a significant thematic distinction exists between the parody and the original.

These few cautionary points are frail reassurance to those of us who'd like to create parodies. Like it or not, the status quo *isn't fair* to us, and works against the free exchange of ideas.

Which is why I'm on my soapbox here yelling. A few historic notables like Aristophanes, Cervantes and Henry Fielding might yell along with me, were they alive. Parodists all, they would probably lampoon the hell out of judges or opinion makers who suggest that we water down an art form unnecessarily in the interest of commerce.

But they aren't here; you and I are. I've put forward my ideas; now you bounce back with yours.

But if you're tempted to express them in the form of a parody, heed the bottom-line advice of Tim Jensen of the VLA:

Consult a lawyer before you publish!

And be wary playing with guillotines. ■

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Fandom

(Continued from page 56)

ty in purchasing or gaining access to a handset letterpress, the most commonly-accepted method for printing member-journals at the time. It was this stumbling block that made it impossible to establish a "mines" requirement that all members be active publishers. Yet the notion of a new kind of apa persisted, an apa in which every member was a participant.

Oddly enough, the link between mundane and fannish Amateur Press Associations was provided by no less a personage than H.P. Lovecraft himself. Lovecraft became involved in amateur journalism as a youth, and joined one of NAPA's rivals, the United Amateur Press Association (UAPA) in 1914, and then NAPA itself three years later (for both of which he served several terms as president). SF then-Jan Donald Wollheim learned of the mundane spas through Lovecraft in the mid-1930s, shortly before Lovecraft's untimely death in 1937. By most recountings, Wollheim saw apas as a useful solution to the problem of keeping up with fanzine trading and a method of reducing postage as well, and promptly joined the National and United Apas. With help from some of the other major SF fans of the time, he then founded FAPA, the Fantasy Amateur Press Association. July 1937 saw the first tiny, 42-page bundle of fanzines, still bearing little resemblance to any modern-day apa. But it was only three months later, in FAPA's second mailing, that two of its members introduced what later became the life-blood of contemporary apas: mailing comments.

Quite simply, mailing comments are the inclusion in members' apazines of comments on the previous mailing. It was the solution to the noted lack of communication within mundane apas; prior to the mailing comments in FAPA, discussion of topics raised in one another's publications was almost nonexistent. Mailing comments provided a sense of continuity from mailing to mailing, and brought about a degree of group spirit and camaraderie among members never before conceived. More than merely exchanging fanzines, apa members now exchanged ideas; rather than just absorbing information, they were now encouraged to think about and react to what their fellow members had to say.

Additionally, FAPA promoted the notion of substance over style; inexpensively mimeographed or spirit-duplicated contributions were not discouraged but actually taken for granted to be the most sensible printing method for a low-circulation apazine, and this made it practical and affordable for every member to contribute. Unique, innovative and successful in everything it set out to achieve, FAPA became the model for most of its followers and imitators in SF fandom, and eventually for its second cousin, comics fandom. ■

Trina

(Continued from page 52)

ROBBINS: It's definitely moral support; aside from that, we rarely work together; although it's been known to happen. I do my thing, as it were, and he does his. Through Steve, I've learned a respect for the above-ground cartoonists that I think most UG cartoonists don't have. True, some of them are dreadful Marvel-style clones, but a majority are polished professionals. I also get turned on to artists I might never have looked at; through Steve, or see things through new eyes, as it were. I think the same thing applies to Steve. Of course, its always great to have someone to talk comics with.

CS: How did you come to get turned on to the idea of doing the adaptation of *Dope*?

ROBBINS: In 1970, the Holmes Used Book Store in San Francisco had a massive sale. I picked up *Dope* by Sax Rohmer of *Dr. Fu Manchu* fame. I was totally taken in by it. It was always a story that I wanted to illustrate; it's gothic.

I submitted it to one publisher who turned it down—which I viewed as their loss—then I showed it to *Eclipse*. They clearly wanted it. It will run 10 chapters. Ed: Have you considered collaborating with other artists?

ROBBINS: Steve and I are doing the inside front cover of *Gates of Eden #2* [on sale in February]. I've been talking with Sharon Rudahl about collaborating on a comic based on an old Yiddish song written in the Warsaw ghetto during W.W. II. Brian Talbot and I have corresponded about doing a story together, but I think that one will have to wait until I get to Europe and visit and we can work it out together.

CS: Where do you see the comics industry going now that the direct market has asserted itself?

ROBBINS: There's always going to be superheroes punching out super-villains for kids in cheap, pulp comics that cost less than anything else. That's never going away. I shouldn't say they're for kids . . . they're for *little boys*. I think the alternatives are going to be for grown-ups who like intelligent comics who will go out of their way to walk into a comic store and buy them instead of going to the 7-11. Those people will care enough to spend the money for them. It's been happening in Europe for years and I think that's the future of comics. Intelligent, grown-up comics don't have to be filled with sex and violence and dope which is what Undergrounds were.

CS: Where do you see your place?

ROBBINS: With the alternatives.

CS: Where do you see your art and stories going?

ROBBINS: I'd love to perfect my craft. I always have. The more you work at it the better you get. I want to perfect my color, I want to perfect my drawing. I'd like to learn perspective.

Cerebus

(Continued from page 24)

"Who hasn't he brought back?

CS: And when will your version of Red Sonja reappear?

DAVE: Soon. I couldn't figure out how to bring her back. "High Society," though I sketched her in a ball gown and that didn't work. I also thought about a chain mail bikini, but that didn't work, either. I do like her, but Frank Thorne is really the only artist who can make that type of character palatable to me. She'll be back.

We'll see more of the Duck statue story my version of *The Maltese Falcon*, which takes place over the whole 300 issues. And there will be false endings. "Great, he finally got rid of the girls' school storyline," and then. BOOM! It circles back in a different form. "Gee, I thought he had that wrapped up." "High Society" ends in issue #50 on a specific note which makes you think everything is wrapped up, but it will all come unfuried again. And there will probably be a dozen "Mind Games" stories. Right now, I'm looking at the whole 300 issues through gauze, saying, "As soon as I reach this point, I can do this." I get there, and it just won't fit, but it drops right into place next issue. It's almost as if the story exists in and of itself, and I have to be in a suitable frame of mind to make it come out correctly. If I try to force it, it won't work. It's the equivalent of walking through the woods, looking for a path and suddenly, the underbrush is too thick, it's not there. But if you walk back five feet, you come to the current resistance, and it becomes easy to follow until the next time you veer from it.

CS: Does a new reader, checking out *Cerebus* for the first time, with issue #45, for example, pick up on all these things?

DAVE: Amazingly, yes. There are things in each issue so new readers can easily get into the series, but it's a foregone conclusion that they won't understand the whole thing. That's the essence of a 300-issue comic book. Events occur in issue #44, which are far more important to the readers who have been there since #1 than those who started at #15 and so on down the line, but there's still something for everyone to varying degrees.

CS: And how will it all end in issue #300—with "The Death of Cerebus?"

DAVE: Oh yes. This is the essence of the 300-issue tale. Cerebus gets older and dies.

DENI: It makes sense. We all die.

DAVE: I've already thrown out two or three endings. I'll find an interesting way to do it. I have a long time to decide. I'll have a good ending, a good way for Cerebus the Aardvark to die. ■

NEXT ISSUE: Dave and Deni Sim talk more of aardvarks and alternative publishing as well as color portfolios, animated films, and the perils of playing Rodney Dangerfield. They'll tell you. It's rough.

Lettering

(Continued from page 8)

Dear Sirs:

. . . You wanted your readers to write you a letter, so here's my letter.

First, I wish to thank you for the article on Camelot 3000. The article was very informative and that poster was beautiful. Brian Bolland and Mike Barr are to be commended for the great comic they have created. I have bought the first issue of Camelot 3000 and I can tell you that this one is going to be a classic.

Second, as to what I would like to see in COMICS SCENE, I would like to see an interview with Scott Shaw and something on that great comic: *Captain Carrot and His Amazing Zoo Crew*.

And last, but not least, I have two questions: 1) Is the new *X-Men* series going on public sale or on direct sales only?

2) Is the new *Omega Men* series going to be a maxi-series or is it going to be a regular monthly series?

Well, that's all I have to say for now, be seeing you next issue.

Kevin Hall
Rte. 1, Box 216
Castlewood, VA 24224

1) The New Mutants, which finally came out in November, is a monthly newsstand comic book. 2) The Omega Men is an on-going series, it being DC's first regular title in the Direct Market.

A Scott Shaw interview is sitting in Bob's desk, just waiting for the right time to spring out and see the light of day. Soon, he and Scott hope.

Dear COMICS SCENE,

. . . I just read that William Rotsler who wrote that new Blackhawk novel is writing a Silver Surfer novel. If this novel is published, will it be used for the script for the Silver Surfer movie?

Pvt. Michael Mikolowsky
ACO Mar. Sks. Box 56
FPO San Francisco, CA 96651

The Rotsler novel was written years ago as part of Pocket Books' 11-volume Marvel Superheroes series. The book never saw print due to contractual problems and as of now, no plans exist for the manuscript. As for the Surfer film, the rights are up in the air.

Another Marvel Gripe

Dear COMICS SCENE CREW,

. . . Like other readers of your excellent magazine, I too, am upset by the way Marvel handles its customers and subscribers. Being a fan for more than nine years, I have watched Marvel's gradual decline. Due to this, I have cancelled all my subscriptions except for *Star Wars* (I am a tried and true *Star Wars* fan) and *Micronauts* (heaven only knows why). Lately I have found myself being pulled over to the "Distinguished Competition," where I've found the stories and art much more appealing.

David Margosian
426 Four Mile Rd.
Racine, WI 53402

On Loose Cruse

Dear Editor:

. . . Please let me add a strong endorsement of Howard Cruse in the face of some who profess to dislike—or at best fail to identify with—his column. I suspect that those who respond so negatively to what he writes are younger fans still enamored of the *Bif Bam Pow* school of comics. They might prefer endless repetitions of which superhero is fighting the Ninja this month, or whose costume is newly color-coordinated. These same people fail to respond to the character profiles of comics and cartoonists who predate the Stan Lee advent and thus are unknown to them. We adults prefer something a little more substantial.

Cruse writes as a grownup for grownups, and shows considerable insight into the creative process. His piece on Marv Tannenberg's difficult search for himself (in #2) was excellent, and his appreciation of Carl Barks and the principle of self-respect (in #5) equally good. I am fascinated by the subtleties involved in the issue of Disney vs. the Air Pirates, and look forward to the rest of his treatment. In fact, I have yet to read anything by him that is not stimulating and thoughtful. That is to say, mature. He is, in my opinion, one of your fine magazine's very best features. I hope you'll hold onto him.

Aaron Campbell

Dear Editor,

. . . Underground comix aren't my cup of tea but Howard Cruse's article in COMICS SCENE #6 bothered me somewhat. I had never heard of the so-called Air Pirates before reading "Abduction of a Mouse," but Howard seemed to be defending the Pirates' illegal and to my mind, immoral, use of licensed characters without permission. Come on! Laws are laws! You can't justify breaking copyright laws, or any laws, just because you don't agree with them! The right way to protest about the supposed unfairness of a law is to vote against the candidates who support it. That's why our countries have elections, isn't it? In a nutshell, I have no sympathy whatsoever for any Pirates that Howard seems to regard as his heroes.

Oh, before I go, I disagree with Mark Paniccia regarding the cartoons of Brian Pearce. I love 'em. Next to Fred Hembeck, Brian is the funniest and most accomplished cartoonist I have ever seen.

Dale Coe
41 Whitecross Road
Warrington, Cheshire WA5 1LR
ENGLAND

Howard isn't applauding anyone breaking the law—rather, he is exploring why the laws are there and how people are dealing with them. Read the final installment in this issue and see if you don't change your mind. If parody of established characters isn't allowed, then Mad, Saturday Night Live, Fridays and all of Bob Hope's specials would be illegal and not very funny.

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COMIC COLLECTORS Buying Handbook: SASE & 25¢. Comic Indexing System Starter Set: SASE & 75¢. Visions, Dept W8, Box 28283, Tempe, AZ 85282.

Ed. Notes

The Two & a Half Dollar Comic

Once upon a time, comic books used to be 64-pages long and "all in color for a dime." Now, I realize that most of us aren't old enough to remember those days, but what about the 12¢ comic? It wasn't that long ago. When I was a kid, comics were 12¢ and they stayed that way for a long time. Then one day they were 15¢. That lasted for a few years. More recently, the price has gone up from 30¢ to 50¢ and now it is 60¢. Surely, it's just a short time until the cheapest comic you can buy will cost a buck.

Before you start making disparaging remarks, let me assure you that this is not a reflection of greed on the part of the comics publishers—indeed, profits are way off. The spiraling retail price of a comic is just one more indication of the deep economic woes affecting the entire world. (The publishing industry has been hit particularly hard. . . from newspapers and hardback book companies to publishers of paperbacks, periodicals and pulps.)

I don't like the thought of paying a dollar for a comic book. On the other hand, I never thought that I would spend $40 for a pair of sneakers!

Recently I stopped at my local comics shop, West Side Comics, to buy some new books. Along with the 60¢ titles, I purchased some higher priced items. At a back spiece, I bought the following: Marvel's *No-Prize Book* #1, Pacific's *Ms. Mystic* #1 and *Pacific Presents (The Rocketeer)* #1, and DC's *Camelot 3000* #4. The production values of these books are higher than those of the 60¢ comics, except for the *No-Prize* book which, for a true Marvel fan, is more than worth the cover price anyway.

I also bought Marvel's *Fanfare* #7, for $1.25, *Dreadstar* #2, for $1.50, *Bizarre Adventures* #34, for $2.00, *Kull the Conqueror* #2, for $2.00, and *Doctor Strange Special Edition* #1, for a staggering $2.50! *Fanfare* was the biggest disappointment, featuring a ho-hum Hulk tale that reeked of deja vu.

The production values in all of these are first-rate. The books range from 32-48 pages, with *Doctor Strange* as one of the largest regular-sized comic ever printed at 72 pages. But *Strange* is a reprint volume, the stories originally appearing in 1974 in four issues of *Doctor Strange*. Is it worth the $2.50? Well, if you've never read those stories, it certainly is. It would take from six to eight dollars to buy the four back issues. And this volume has been recolored in vibrant primaries and pastels. You even get to see the four original covers, reprinted on page 72. Unfortunately, the covers from *Strange* #1 and 2 have been miscolored, with some strange changes also on the cover of 5. The Berni Wrightson cover is not up to his usual standards, but the Frank Brunner inside back cover is beautiful. Still, if you're a collector, I doubt that this volume has much value above it's hefty cover price.

The best buy, in my entirely subjective opinion, is the volume of *Kull*. The all-new Howard-esque story by Doug Moench is wonderfully complemented by John Bolton's fine, detailed artwork. Bolton's classic compositions combine with Moench's prose to produce a top-notch book that can take its place with some of the early *Kull* classics crafted by Roy Thomas, Ross Andru and Wally Wood, Marie and John Severin, and Mike Ploog.

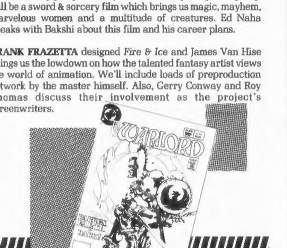
The bottom line then is that some books are worth more than 60¢ in this brave new world of the 1980s. Some are worth $2.00. . . but some aren't worth the paper they're printed on. *Caveat Emptor!*

Howard Zimmerman/Editor-in-Chief

To Be Continued...

RALPH BAKSHI claims this will be his *last* animated film and he is certainly going out in style. *Fire & Ice*, opening this Spring, will be a sword & sorcery film which brings us magic, mayhem, marvelous women and a multitude of creatures. Ed Naha speaks with Bakshi about this film and his career plans.

FRANK FRAZETTA designed *Fire & Ice* and James Van Hise brings us the lowdown on how the talented fantasy artist views the world of animation. We'll include loads of preproduction artwork by the master himself. Also, Gerry Conway and Roy Thomas discuss their involvement as the project's screenwriters.



MIKE GRELL begins a new phase with the forthcoming *Jon Sable, Freelance* from First Comics. In an exclusive interview, Grell talks about his career in comics, his work on the Tarzan comic strip, the world of *Warlord* and the future.

KILLRAVEN returns in the pages of *Epic Illustrated*, beginning in April, and we'll preview the work of Don McGregor and P. Craig Russell in full-color. This is one feature you won't want to miss!

TERRY & THE PIRATES is one of the most important adventure strips in comics history, and Ron Goulart takes a special look at Milton Caniff's world of high-action and sultry women.

PLUS a profile of Pacific Comics from *Captain Victory* to *Ms. Mystic* and beyond. . . jim Starlin offers some thoughts in the Guest Spot. . .Dave and Deni Sim continue to discuss and dismember Cerebus the *Aardvark*. . .Creating the Comics showcases the kind of job the editor does. . .letters, news, editorials and lots more!

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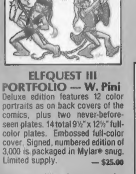

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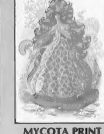

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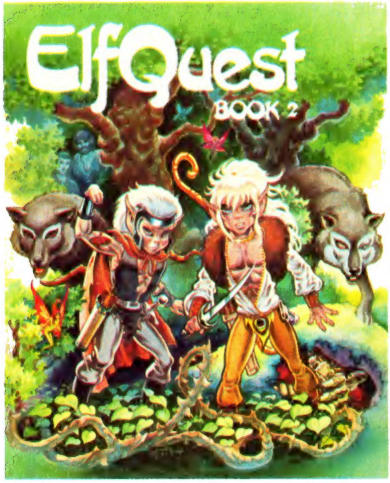

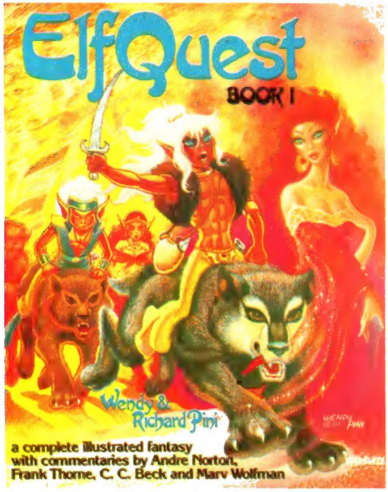
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